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THE USE OF FOLK MUSIC IN HARRY SOMERS' OPERA *LOUIS RIEL*

by

LILLIAN BUCKLER

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Use of Folk Music in Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*" submitted by Lillian Buckler in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Musicology.

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Susan Jackel

Date June 28, 1984

ABSTRACT

This thesis is intended as an investigation of the folk music in the opera *Louis Riel*. Although the use of the folk music has been frequently mentioned in the literature, there has been a need for a more detailed study of this important aspect in a work of such historical significance.

The importance of the opera *Louis Riel* and its place in the history of Canadian opera are discussed in the opening chapter. A biographical sketch of the composer is given along with pertinent comments on the work by both the composer and librettist. The various productions of *Louis Riel* are discussed with a view to differences in the stage, radio and television productions.

There are two categories of folk material in the opera: native people's music, and French and English popular songs of the period. The study of these two categories forms the central portion of the thesis. The songs specifically discussed are: *Kuyas*, *The Buffalo Hunt*, *Le Roi Malheureux*, *Riel Sits in His Chamber o' State*, and *We'll Hang Him up the River*. The folk music is examined in comparison to the original sources from which it is drawn. The origins of the songs are traced with a view to their background, to whom they belonged, and the composer of the text or the melody; English translations are provided where required. The folk material in the completed score is studied in terms of the use of the texts, musical style, compositional technique, and vocal and instrumental setting. Characteristics of Somers' musical style are noted in his improvisatory and highly-ornamented melodic line, a very free rhythmic concept, along with the techniques of juxtaposition and superimposition of different musical styles.

The study also shows where, why, and in what manner, Somers utilizes the folk material to underline the purposes of the drama. The motivic and dramatic musical means by which he achieves this are discussed in the closing chapter.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I THE OPERA *LOUIS RIEL* 1

- A Survey of the Literature 1
- Aim of Thesis 3
- Canadian Opera Before 1967 3
- Harry Somers 8
- The Centennial Commission 12
- Productions 14

II THE ORIGINAL SOURCES 17

- Folk Music Collecting 17
- The Folk Songs 18
- Transcriptions and Collections 21

III NATIVE-INDIAN FOLK MUSIC 38

- Brief History and Stylistic Characteristics 38
- *Kuyas* 40
- *The Buffalo Hunt* 48

IV POPULAR SONGS OF THE PERIOD 58

- The French Folk Music 59
- The English Folk Music 62

V FOLK MUSIC AND THE DRAMA 70

- Uses of Native-Indian Folk Music 71
- Uses of French and English Folk Music 76
- Conclusion 81

* * * * *

BIBLIOGRAPHY 84

APPENDIX

- I *KUYAS* 92
- II *THE BUFFALO HUNT* 98
- III *LE ROI MALHEUREUX* 106
- IV *RIEL SITS IN HIS CHAMBER O' STATE* 107
- V *O HEY, RIEL* 108
- VI *WE'LL HANG HIM UP THE RIVER* 109

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE PAGE

2.1 *Hano* 24

2.2 *Hanawyaw* 25

2.3 *The Buffalo Hunt* 28

2.4 *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux* 31

2.5 *The Marching Song* 35

2.6 *We'll Hang Him up the River* 37

3.1 *Fermatas* in Somers, *Kuyas* 41

3.2 *Hano* 43

3.3 *Kuyas* 43

3.4 *Kuyas, Più Mosso* 46

3.5 *The Buffalo Hunt* 52

3.6 *The Buffalo Hunt*, Act II, scene vi 53

3.7 *The Buffalo Hunt*, Act II, scene vi 55

4.1 *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux* 60

4.2 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Act I, scene ii 61

4.3 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Meas. 15-20 62

4.4 *The Marching Song* 64

4.5 *Riel Sits in His Chamber o' State*, Introduction 65

4.6 *O Hey, Riel*, Introduction 66

4.7 *We'll Hang Him up the River* 67

4.8 *We'll Hang Him up the River*, Act II, scene iv 68

EXAMPLE PAGE

5.1 Introduction 72

5.2 Act III, scene i 74

5.3 Indian Dance No. 1, Act II, scene vi 75

5.4 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Act II, scene ii 77

5.5 Flute Solo, Act I, scene ii 78

5.6 *We'll Hang Him up the River*, Act III, scene 6-7 79

5.7 *Orangemen Unite*, Act II, scene iv 80

5.8 Victorian Tune, Act II, scene iv 81

CHAPTER 1

THE OPERA *LOUIS RIEL*.

In any discussion of Harry Somers, whether it is of the man or of his music, the most frequently mentioned work is the opera *Louis Riel*. The three-act work in seventeen scenes is one of massive proportions and is considered to be Somers' most important achievement to date.[1] It was first performed in Toronto on September 23, 1967, as part of the Canadian Centennial celebrations, and received enthusiastic reviews. Critic Harold Rosenthal stated: "Somers brilliantly exploits a great deal of folk material including a very moving ... Indian song, sung by Marguerite, and some rousing marching songs ..."[2]

A Survey of the Literature

The use of folk music in the opera has been frequently mentioned in the literature. However, there is a need for a more detailed study of this important aspect, a study which will shed light on the songs, the context in which they are placed, and most importantly, the way in which they are treated musically by Somers.

---

[1] Brian Cherney, *Harry Somers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975, p. 129. Some sources indicate there are eighteen scenes in the entire opera, no doubt including the Battle Interlude in Act III. See *Ibid*., p. 171.

[2] Harold Rosenthal, Review of *Louis Riel*, *Opera*, Vol. XVIII (1967), p. 866.

The most extensive analytical discussion of the opera is to be found in the book on Somers by Brian Cherney.[3] It contains an entire chapter on *Louis Riel* as well as a scene-by-scene synopsis of the work according to setting, plot and type of music used by the composer. There is some discussion of the use of folk music and the sources of particular songs, but Cherney himself states that "A detailed account of the musical and dramatic structure of this complex work would in itself require a complete book."[4]

In *Canadian Music in the Twentieth Century*, George Proctor briefly discusses *Riel*.[5] He mentions two of the songs, *We'll Hang Him Up the River* and the lament *Kuyas*, sung by Marguerite, but does not attempt to discuss the actual music.

The only monograph on the subject of the opera is a research report by R. Murray Schafer.[6] There is a brief discussion of the libretto and music with mention of three songs, *Kuyas, Riel Sits in His State*, and *Orangemen Unite*. However, the main focus of the study is concerned with audience and audience reaction to the various productions in the theatre, on radio and TV, rather than with the music.

Probably the greatest collection of articles on the opera is to be found in the Centennial Issue of *Opera Canada*.[7] It is invaluable as a source of background information on the initial production by the Canadian Opera Company. It contains articles by both the composer and librettist Mavor Moore, as well as information on the many individual artists involved.

---

[3] Cherney, *Harry Somers*, pp. 129-140.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[5] George A. Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) pp. 151-152.

[6] R. Murray Schafer, *The Public of the Music Theatre: Louis Riel: A Case Study* (Wien: Universal Edition, c1972).

[7] *Opera Canada*, Vol. 8 (September 1967).

Although numerous articles in the literature briefly mention the use of folk music in *Louis Riel*, none of them deals specifically or at any length with this important aspect of the work.

Aim of Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed study of the varied folk materials used in the opera. There are two categories of folk music: native people's music, and French and English popular songs of the period.[8] The original sources used by the composer will be studied and comparisons made with the completed score in terms of both the musical style and compositional technique. The study will also show where, why, and in what manner, the folk music is utilized to underline the purposes of the drama in this historically significant work.

Canadian Opera Before 1967

The opera, *Louis Riel*, has been described as "an epoch-making event in the history of opera in Canada."[9] The reasons for this assertion will be discussed in detail later in the thesis. However, in order to gain greater insight into the impact it had on Canadian opera, it is important to place it in its historical context.

---

[8] Cherney, *Harry Somers*, p. 134.

[9] Gilles Potvin, "Performers," *Aspects of Music in Canada*, edited by Arnold Walter (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 165.

Canadian opera may be said to have had its beginnings with the works of Joseph Quesnel (1749-1809). A Frenchman by birth, Quesnel spent a number of years travelling as a sailor before arriving in Canada at the age of thirty. He settled near Montreal in Boucherville, Quebec where he wrote a number of plays, poems and two operas: *Lucas et Cécile*, which contains seventeen musical numbers of which only the vocal parts are preserved; and *Colas et Colinette*, a prose comedy in three acts which contains numerous arias, duets and a finale. The latter work was written in 1788 and first performed in Montreal in 1790 with a subsequent revival in Quebec in 1805. The vocal parts and second-violin part have been preserved.[10] Many of the melodies are simple, diatonic and pleasing with the second violin accompanying in thirds or sixths. The first violin probably played in octaves or in unison with the singer.[11] The musical style belongs to that of the French comic opera, charming, elegant and with rustic simplicity. The influence of Canadian life and themes is not apparent in these works of Quesnel, whose education was entirely French.[12]

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[10] Archives, Séminaire de Québec, Université Laval.

[11] Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 65.

[12] A reconstruction of *Colas et Colinette* has been made by Godfrey Ridout and the work recorded by C.B.C. See J. Quesnel, *Colas et Colinette ou Le Bailli Dupé* (Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson Ltd., 1974).

The earliest recorded history of an opera performance by a visiting troupe is that of *Richard Coeur de Lion* by Belgian composer, André Grétry, which took place in the Theatre Royal of Halifax on February 14, 1798.[13]

By the mid-nineteenth century there were instances of local opera performances. In May of 1846 the Societé des Amateurs Canadiens gave a performance of *Le Devin du Village* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Quebec. In July of 1853 the Artists' Association Italian Opera Company gave a performance of Bellini's *Norma* in Toronto. In the second half of the nineteenth century there are reports of local opera companies in Montreal and Quebec.

The first indication of Canadian compositions from this period are in the field of light opera or operettas. *H.M.S. Parliament, or the Lady Who Loved a Government Clerk* by an unnamed composer, is known only by its libretto, which was printed in Ottawa in 1880. It is interesting to note that the subject of the Riel rebellion was used in an operetta entitled *"Our Boys" in the Riel Rebellion (Halifax to Saskatchewan)*, by some of the soldiers who had taken part. The work was staged in Halifax in 1886 by soldiers of the 63rd Halifax Rifles and contained both borrowed and original melodies. Another military operetta, *Leo, The Royal Cadet* by Oscar F. Telgmann (1853-1945) was written and produced in Kingston, Ontario in 1889.[14]

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[13] Kallmann, *History of Music*, p. 62.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256.

In the early years of the twentieth century the Montreal Opera Company was formed (1910-1913). The company also performed in Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto and Rochester, New York, with a considerable repertoire of grand opera: *La Boheme, Madame Butterfly, Aida, Tosca*, and *Carmen*.

The earliest opera composed and produced in Canada in the twentieth century is that of the *Belles of Barcelona* by Ralph Joseph Horner (1849-1926). Before emigrating to Canada in 1909, Horner was known as a choral and operatic conductor in England. He settled in Winnipeg where he formed an opera company. It was there that the *Belles of Barcelona*, a light comic opera, was produced in 1911. Other romantic operettas were composed by Joseph Nevin Doyle of Belleville, Ontario: The *Golden Age* performed in Belleville and Toronto in 1915, and *Cingalee*, and the *Enchanted Garden* which was uncompleted at his death in 1916.[15]

In the years after World War I, numerous opera companies were formed throughout the country: Orpheus Society (1917) in Ottawa; The Vancouver Operatic Club (1923); The Canadian Operatic Club (1924-1926) in Toronto; The Montreal Operatic Society (1925-1927); the Conservatory Opera Company (1925) in Toronto; The Edmonton Civic Opera Association (1935); The Toronto Opera Guild (1935); The Montreal Opera Guild (1941).[16]

According to Proctor, the only operatic composition worthy of note during this period, is the ballad opera *L'Ordre de Bon Temps* (1928) by Healey Willan. The subject deals with the early settlement at Port-Royal in 1605. In the style of ballad opera, the work contains folk songs dating from the time of the story and the text is in both French and English. Later works by Willan include the radio operas, *Transit Through Fire*, 1942; and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, 1943-1945, which were staged at a later date.[17]

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

[16] Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey* (Agincourt, Ont.: GLC Publishers Ltd., 1982), pp. 135-136.

By the mid-twentieth century opera was again being prepared for stage performances, although for small forces of the chamber-opera genre. Examples include: Barbara Pentland's *The Lake*, 1952; John Beckwith's *Night Blooming Cereus*, 1958; Lorne Bett's *Riders to the Sea*, 1955; Maurice Blackburn's *Une Mesure de Silence*, 1953-1954; and Harry Somers' *The Fool*, 1953. During the 1960s a number of full-length stage productions were produced. A revised version of Healey Willan's *Deirdre* was given its first stage performance on April 2, 1965 by the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music Opera School. R. Murray Schafer's *Loving /Toi*, 1965, was first produced as a television opera and used both the French and English languages. Another noteworthy chamber opera is Jean Vallerand's *Le Magicien*, 1961. It is in the French neoclassical style and Vallerand employs parody technique of jazz "blues" in the work.

Opera composition in Canada received its greatest encouragement with the approach of centennial year in 1967. According to Proctor "The culmination of opera in the 1960s came in centennial year with the presentation of no less than five operas on national subjects, the most noteworthy being *Louis Riel* by Harry Somers."[18]

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[17] Proctor, *Canadian Music*, pp. 20-21, 51, 91.

Harry Somers

Canadian composer, pianist and broadcaster, Harry Stuart Somers, was born in Toronto on September 11, 1925. He was fourteen years old when introduced to classical music by two family friends who were pianists. Studies then began with Dorothy Hornfelt in 1939 and continued with Reginald Godden 1942-1943, Weldon Kilburn 1945-1948 and E. Robert Schmitz during the summer of 1948. He began to compose independently in 1939, but it was not until 1942 that actual composition studies began with John Weinzweig. These continued until 1949, except for a period with the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1943-1945.

It was in 1949 that Somers was awarded a scholarship by the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association enabling him and his wife, Catherine Mackie, to travel to Paris where he studied composition with Darius Milhaud for one year. On his return to Toronto, Somers earned a living as a taxi driver and then as a music copyist in order to continue his compositional activities.

In 1960 he returned to Paris on a Canada Council Senior Fellowship and briefly studied Gregorian chant at Solesmes. Somers' first wife died in 1963 and in 1967 he married Canadian actress, Barbara Chilcott. During the 1960s Somers supported himself solely through commissions and also became interested in broadcasting and music education. He was involved in a number of CBC radio and television programmes, for example: A two-hour documentary on Stravinsky in 1962, and the series, *Music for Today* from 1965 to 1969. In 1968 to 1969 he worked with the North York Board of Education in Toronto discovering ways of developing musical creativity in children. In 1971 he was able to return to Europe on a grant from the Canadian Cultural Institute, which allowed him to spend the next few years in Rome.

---

[18] Proctor, *Canadian Music*, p. 137.

Somers is a composer with an international reputation whose works include music for stage, concert hall, film, radio and television. He has composed for voice and instruments, as well as creating electronic music, and has employed both traditional and new forms. His music has been performed throughout the United States, Central and South America, Europe and the Soviet Union.

Characteristics of Somers' musical style, which have probably been carried forward from his early studies with Weinzweig, are the use of the extended melodic line, and the manipulation of tension by juxtaposing contrasting styles of tonal and atonal writing. Another method of producing and releasing tension is through what Somers calls "dynamic unrest," with sharp fluctuations in volume applied to single notes, segments of melodic line, or, in orchestral works, through the building up of sustained chords. In vocal composition Somers frequently makes use of phonetic sounds, timbral inflections and minute ornamentation.[19]

Since the 1960s Somers has received commissions from major institutions and orchestras as well as individual artists. Some of these have included the Stratford Festival for *Five Songs for Dark Voice* for Maureen Forrester; the Vancouver International Festival for the *String Quartet No. 3* for the Hungarian Quartet; the CBC for numerous works including *Voiceplay* for Cathy Berberian; and the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation for *Louis Riel* for the Canadian Opera Company.

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[19] Brian Cherney, "Harry Somers," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 882.

To date, the opera *Louis Riel*, is Somers' largest and most important work. Other works for the stage have included a number of ballets: *The Fisherman and His Soul* (1956), *Ballad* (1958), *The House of Atreus* (1963), *And* (1969), and *The Merman of Orford* (1978). In the field of opera, Somers has written two one-act works, both of which are chamber operas: *The Fool* (1953), and *Death of Enkidu: Part One* (1977).

Somers' first opera, *The Fool*, is an opera in two scenes with libretto by Michael Fram. It deals allegorically with the sufferings and suicide of a court fool. The text:

> ... implies meanings within meanings and hardly lends itself to the emotional requirements of the operatic form. But even as long [ago] as 1952, when the opera was written, Somers' dramatic-musical gift was already highly developed. And the music carries a charge of emotional force far beyond its words ...[20]

There is superimposition and juxtaposition of tonal and atonal musical styles to heighten the dramatic and emotional impact. The vocal techniques consist of four levels: sung speech, dramatic sung recitation, and sung line, which are varied by speech intensity and pitch inflection, as well as the fully sung line in the traditional sense.[21] An instrumental ensemble of two violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and piano accompanies the four singers, making a total of fourteen performers, not including the conductor. The work was first performed in Toronto on November 17, 1956, under the auspices of the Canadian League of Composers and reviews of Somers' first venture into the operatic genre were enthusiastic. A review by Gilles Potvin of *La Presse* states:

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[20] BMI Canada Limited, *Harry Somers*, Pamphlet (Don Mills, Ont.: BMI Canada Limited, n.d.).

[21] Programme Notes, *Harry Somers: Anthology of Canadian Music/ Anthologie de la musique canadienne*, Vols. 1-10 (Radio Canada International, 1980), p. 6.

> Somers has written a score which constantly underlines the symbolic character of his subject ... there is real flair for dramatic situation, a certain gift for vocal writing and a capability to illustrate the emotional conditions ...[22]

Somers' other one-act chamber opera is *The Death of Enkidu: Part One* (1977) written to a libretto by Martin Kinch. The opera is set in two scenes and Somers has plans to revise and enlarge it at some time in the future. The cast of this second chamber opera is expanded to include five voices: a contralto, two tenors, baritone, bass, along with a male actor and a female dancer. The accompanying ensemble consists of a flute, clarinet, two horns, harp, piano and three percussion instruments. The work was commissioned by the Co-Opera Theatre in association with the Toronto Free Theatre and received its premiere in Toronto in December, 1976.[23]

Somers' most frequently discussed work is the full-length opera, *Louis Riel*. It was commissioned by the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation for performance by the Canadian Opera Company during Canada's centennial celebrations in 1967.

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[22] BMI Canada Limited, *Harry Somers*, Pamphlet, n.d.

[23] PRO Canada Limited, *Harry Somers*, Pamphlet (Don Mills, Ont.: PRO Canada Limited, 1979).

The Centennial Commission

Somers recalls the first time he heard of the centennial commission:

> ... when I was in the Ottawa airport ... Mavor Moore happened to be passing through the lobby and said to me 'I want to get in touch with you shortly about a very large work I have in mind.' Some time later he did get in touch with me. We were to have a meeting with Floyd Chalmers ... one of the prime backers to commission Mavor and myself to write an opera on Louis Riel.[24]

The libretto by Mavor Moore and Jacques Languirand deals sympathetically with the character and aspirations of the Métis leader and the struggle to secure rights for his people by leading uprisings in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the years between 1869 and 1885.

Riel was born among the Métis in St. Boniface, Manitoba in 1844. His mother was the daughter of the first white woman to live in the Northwest, and his father was a Métis chief. The family was highly-esteemed in the farming community, and Louis was sent East to be educated in a Montreal seminary. When he returned to the West after ten years in Montreal, he was well-equipped to be a spokesman for his people. Riel became the leader of the French-speaking halfbreeds of the Northwest at the age of twenty-five. He remained a symbol of their struggle for self-realization in an expanding Canada until his death by hanging in 1885.

The rebellions of 1869 and 1885 are amongst the most controversial in Canadian history. In choosing this subject for the centennial commission, Mavor Moore states:

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[24] Harry Somers, "Louis Riel: The Score," *Opera Canada*, Vol. 8 (September 1967), p. 46.

> Even the dean of Canadian historians could not resist thinking of Louis Riel in operatic terms ... He is an immensely colorful personification of some of the great liturgical themes of mankind ... of the idealist driven mad by continued betrayal ... of the thinker paralyzed by his thinking ... of the halfbreed, the schizophrenic outsider who belongs to no people ... of the leader of a small nation standing in the way of "progress" ... all these themes are timeless ...[25]

Moore first became acquainted with the story of Riel when he played the title role in John Coulter's play, *Riel* in 1947. Another source for Moore's libretto was the well-known book, *Strange Empire* by Joseph Kinsey Howard which was published in 1952. The idea of planning the work in both French and English, as well as Riel's third language, Cree, developed from the events themselves. Also much of the drama is intensified through the juxtaposition of the different languages. The text is actually multilingual as it contains English, French, Cree and Latin. Montreal playwright, Jacques Languirand, collaborated with Moore in setting the French text and made an outstanding contribution.

Somers' organization of the music materials is again by means of superimposition and juxtaposition of tonal and atonal writing, popular songs of the period, native Indian folksong and taped electronic sounds. In regard to the use of folk music in the opera, Somers states:

> ... There's original folk material, which I think is quite beautiful. I made it indigeneous to the whole work so that certain themes and tunes keep recurring, taking on different shapes according to the way events progress. A simple tune at the outset, has another color and kind of significance later ...[26]

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[25] Mavor Moore, "Why Louis Riel?" *Opera Canada*, (May 1966), p. 9.

[26] Harry Somers, "Louis Riel: The Score," *Opera Canada*, Vol. 8 (September 1967), p. 46.

Somers also became deeply involved in the drama of Riel and hoped that the work would help young people to realize the excitement and depth of feeling that existed in the time of Louis Riel.

Louis Riel was one of five operas based on Canadian themes written for the centennial celebrations in 1967. The Commission for the opera by the Floyd S. Chalmers Foundation also included financial assistance from the Canadian Centennial Commission, the Canada Council and the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts.

Productions

The initial theatre production received its premiere in Toronto on September 23, 1967. The cast consisted of twenty-six soloists, chorus, full orchestra, harp, piano, celeste and prepared tape. The title role was played by Bernard Turgeon, Riel's wife Marguerite by Roxolana Roslak, with Patricia Rideout as Riel's mother, Julie, and Cornelis Opthof as Sir John A. Macdonald. The conductor was Victor Feldbrill and Stage Director, Leon Major. There were three performances in Toronto and the work received enthusiastic reviews:

> Somers brilliantly exploits a great deal of folk material ... and some rousing marching songs ... He also indulges in some straight diatonic and some abstract atonal writing as well as some exciting electronic effects ...[27]

Two further performances of the opera were given in Montreal at the World Festival of Expo 67. The following year three more performances were given in Toronto. A subsequent revival of the work took place during the 1975 season of the Canadian Opera Company.

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[27] Harold Rosenthal, Review of *Louis Riel*, *Opera*, Vol. XVIII (1967), p. 866.

The CBC radio broadcasts were recorded entirely from a production staged at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto. There were two radio broadcasts of *Riel*: on the CBC-FM network on October 15, 1967; and on the CBC-AM network on October 19, 1967. The broadcasts contained commentary and conversation between the acts by Mavor Moore and Harry Somers.

The CBC-TV production of *Riel* took place on October 29, 1969 with essentially the same cast and company. A number of changes were made for the television production. The role of Sir John A. Macdonald was played by Donald Rutherford. There were a few minor cuts made for timing purposes and some of the stage sets were reworked so that it could be presented more realistically in the TV version. A significant characterization change was also made for television so that the role played by Sir John A. Macdonald would appear less farcical.[28]

A reviewer of the television production approved of the transition to the new medium:

> The CBC-TV debut ... gives permanence to what might otherwise have been an experience shared by a few and then consigned to the history books ... The shifts of Ottawa and the West scenes [are] more effectively done ... giving the work a more fluid continuity ...[29]

A subsequent revival of the opera by the Canadian Opera Company took place in 1975 with performances in Toronto, Ottawa and in Washington, D.C. This first international performance in Washington on

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[28] R. Murray Schafer, *The Public of the Music Theatre: Louis Riel: A Case Study* (Wien: Universal Edition, c1972), pp. 23-24.

[29] William Littler, "Television Strengthens Impact of Canadian Opera *Louis Riel*," *Toronto Daily Star*, October 28, 1969.

October 23, 1975 was part of the American Bicentennial celebration and the work was widely acclaimed.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINAL SOURCES

In a look at the original sources of the folk music in *Louis Riel*, each song will be viewed as it would have appeared to the composer in its original context. The sources will be examined with explanations of how, where and by whom they were compiled, collected and transcribed and made available to the composer. As well, each song will be discussed as to its particular origin, composer of text or melody, and its placement in the completed score of the opera.

Folk Music Collecting

The earliest part of the twentieth century saw an emphasis on the preservation of the musical heritage of Canada through the collecting and recording of the songs and dances of its people. A prominent figure in this work was Marius Barbeau, eminent ethnomusicologist and anthropologist. Barbeau was connected with the National Museum of Canada from 1911 until his retirement in 1948 and collected thousands of French-Canadian and Indian folk songs. Through the propagation of music festivals and numerous literary articles, he sought to infuse these folk materials into Canadian art music and encouraged their use in extended works by Canadian composers:

> Folk songs, to mean something really vital in the art of a nation, must lead to larger forms -- rhapsodies, concertos, quartets, symphonies, cantatas, ballets or operas. Not until these issue freely from the hand of our composers and grace the great auditoriums of the world will our expectation be fulfilled.[1]

Numerous collections of folk music were made throughout the country in this century, preserving many songs of historical significance.[2] From these early beginnings and collections has grown a considerable repertoire of works containing elements of folk music. Canadian composers have frequently turned to their indigenous musical heritage and have used it in a great variety of ways, ranging from the simple folk song setting to more extended works as foreseen by Barbeau. In symphonic works there are sketches for orchestra, symphonic poems and symphonies. Works for the stage have been represented by both ballet and opera.

The Folk Songs

Somers himself describes his use of folk materials in the score of *Louis Riel*. He considers the original folk music to be quite beautiful. He also states that he made it indigenous to the whole work so that certain themes keep recurring with different settings and significance.[3] The question then arises as to what folk songs were used and from which original sources were they derived. As has been stated earlier, the two categories of folk material consist of Native-Indian music, and French and English popular songs of the period.

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[1] Marius Barbeau, "French and Indian Motifs in Our Music," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928-1929*, edited by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: MacMillan, 1929), p. 132.

[2] A representative sampling of these collections would include: Helen H. Roberts and D. Jenness, *Eskimo Songs: Songs of the Copper Eskimos*, Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1913-1918, Vol. XIV; Ernest MacMillan, *Three Songs of the West Coast* (Oakville, Ont.: Frederick Harris, 1929); Viola E. Garfield, *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music* (New York: J.J. Augustin Publishers [1951]); Margaret Arnett MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1960); Kenneth Peacock, *Songs of Newfoundland Outports* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1965), 3 Vols.; Barbara Cass-Beggs, *Seven Métis Songs of Saskatchewan* (Don Mills, Ont.: BMI Canada Ltd., 1967); Edith Fowke, *Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1973).

Material from the first category, Native-Indian music, is used very prominently throughout the score. The Introduction begins with a percussion improvisation of timpani and tom-toms which plays a motivic role in the work. The Introduction is later repeated as Interlude music during the Battle Scene which falls between scenes iii and iv of Act III. Another example of Native-Indian music is in Act II, scene vi. Two Indian dances open the scene. For the second of these, *The Buffalo Hunt*, the words and music were taken from the collection by Margaret Arnett MacLeod in *Songs of Old Manitoba*.[4]

The most significant example of the use of Indian music is Marguerite's aria *Kuyas* which begins Act III. The motivic basis of the aria which is heard in the first five or six notes, was taken from the song of Skateen, the head chief of the Wolf clan of a Nass River tribe. The song was collected and notated by Marius Barbeau and Sir Ernest

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[3] Somers, "Louis Riel: The Score," p. 46.

[4] Margaret Arnett MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, p. 20.

MacMillan and subsequently published by the American Ethnological Society in *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music.*[5] A sparse accompaniment to the aria is provided by flute, sleigh bells, tom-tom and bass drums. These particular instruments play a motivic role throughout the remainder of the scene and the work.

The French and English popular songs of the period make up the second category of folk material. The French song *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux* with the opening text "Est-il rien sur la terre" from Act I, scene ii, and Act II, scene ii, has both the words and music taken from MacLeod's collection, *Songs of Old Manitoba.*[6] Another example of popular song of the period in English is *The Marching Song* with the text "Riel sits in his Chamber o' State."[7] It is first heard at the beginning of the opera and was pre-recorded by Somers himself for the Introduction. Somers has described it as "a core moving out throughout the whole work." It reappears in Act I, scene i and ii, and from time to time throughout the work as a recurring flute solo. Elements of it are also heard in Julie's aria, Act III, scene v, and at the very end of the opera it is heard again as the flute solo.[8]

The song *We'll Hang Him up the River*, with words and music derived from John Coulter's play, *Riel*, was transcribed by Dr. Healey

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[5] Garfield, *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music*, No. 69.

[6] MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, p. 36.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[8] Cherney, *Harry Somers*, p. 135.

Willan.[9] Its first appearance is in the crowd-haranguing scene, Act II, scene iv. At the very end of Act II it is sung off-stage by approaching troops, and at its final appearance occurs after Riel's trial (Act II, scene vi), where it becomes more vicious and chilling in character to indicate the crowd's thirst for blood.

Transcriptions and Collections

The original sources of the folk songs were the basic folk materials which were made available to the composer. These sources were in the form of transcriptions and collections by ethnomusicologists and historians.

In May of 1927 Marius Barbeau was actively involved in promoting folk music through a festival of French-Canadian and Native-Indian music which was held in Quebec and organized by the CPR under John Murray Gibbon. This was the first of two such festivals in which Barbeau and Sir Ernest MacMillan took part. For the occasion, Barbeau had supplied MacMillan with folk songs, collected in the Province of Quebec and other parts of French Canada, which MacMillan set with piano accompaniments. This resulted in the publication by Frederick Harris of *Twenty-One Songs of French Canada*. It was at this time that Barbeau suggested to MacMillan that he accompany him on a folk song collecting expedition to the North Pacific coast of British Columbia.[10]

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[9] John William Coulter, *Riel*; a play in two parts (Hamilton, Ont.: Cromlech Press, 1962), p. 39.

[10] Ernest MacMillan, "Some Reminiscences of Marius Barbeau," *Musicanada* No. 18 (April 1969), p. 10.

The invitation was proferred as a result of MacMillan's quick appreciation of the French-Canadian folk songs. MacMillan joined Barbeau on the Nass River, two hundred miles north of Vancouver in July of 1928. Barbeau's fieldwork had taken him to the Rockies and the west coast on previous occasions where he had recorded many Indian songs. The recordings were made on a Standard Edison phonograph with delicate wax cylinders which were highly destructible if played too often. The songs included chants, dirges, love songs, spiritual songs and contained:

> ... unfamiliar musical idioms, rhythms and patterns, they were marked by drum beats and accentuated by intricate gutteral languages ... Some songs sounded most intricate and challenging; they passed my comprehension. But I was itching under this challenge ...[11]

His interest in the west coast Indian songs stemmed from the fact that they were so much more complex than those of the interior. The solution seemed to be in the collaboration with an experienced musician like MacMillan to do the transcriptions of these intricate and challenging folk materials.

Seventy-five songs collected on the Skeena and Nass Rivers by Barbeau between 1915 and 1929, some of which were transcribed by MacMillan, resulted in the publication of a monograph with musical scores, texts and translations, and with musical analyses by Marguerite Béclard d'Harcourt.[12] This sample is a small part of a collection of nearly three thousand recordings of Indian songs in the National Museum of Canada.[13]

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[11] Marius Barbeau, "Folk-Song," *Music in Canada* edited by Ernest MacMillan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), pp. 34-35.

[12] Garfield, *The Tsimshian: Their Arts and Music*.

The original sources for *Kuyas*, the aria sung by Marguerite in the first scene of Act III, are from Song No. 69 *Hano*, of the Tsimshian songs. This is a lament or *Lemaw'i* of Alfred Skateen, the head chief of the Wolf clan of the Nass River, and is used at the death of the chief. The family of Skateen was originally the same as that of Weerhae, a tribe of the Gitksan, which also has a variant of the song titled *Hanawyaw*, Song no. 70 of the Tsimshian songs.[14] The opening text of *Kuyas* contains the syllables "Hano, hano," but the remainder of the text is Cree Indian, chosen by Somers from the *Cree Grammar* by Rev. H.E. Hives and the *English-Cree Primer and Vocabulary* by Rev. F.G. Stevens. The text of the last section was taken from a story of Coming Day, an Indian of the Sweetgrass Reserve, as told to Leonard Bloomfield.[15] (see Examples 2.1 and 2.2).

Perhaps the richest source for Somers in his purpose of locating authentic folk material for *Louis Riel* came from the collection, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, by MacLeod. This work was compiled by historian MacLeod in 1959 as an offshoot to her work on the history of Red River colony, and in particular on Cuthbert Grant and the settlement of Grantown. In studying the daily lives of these people, MacLeod uncovered numerous songs which commemorated the history of Manitoba in

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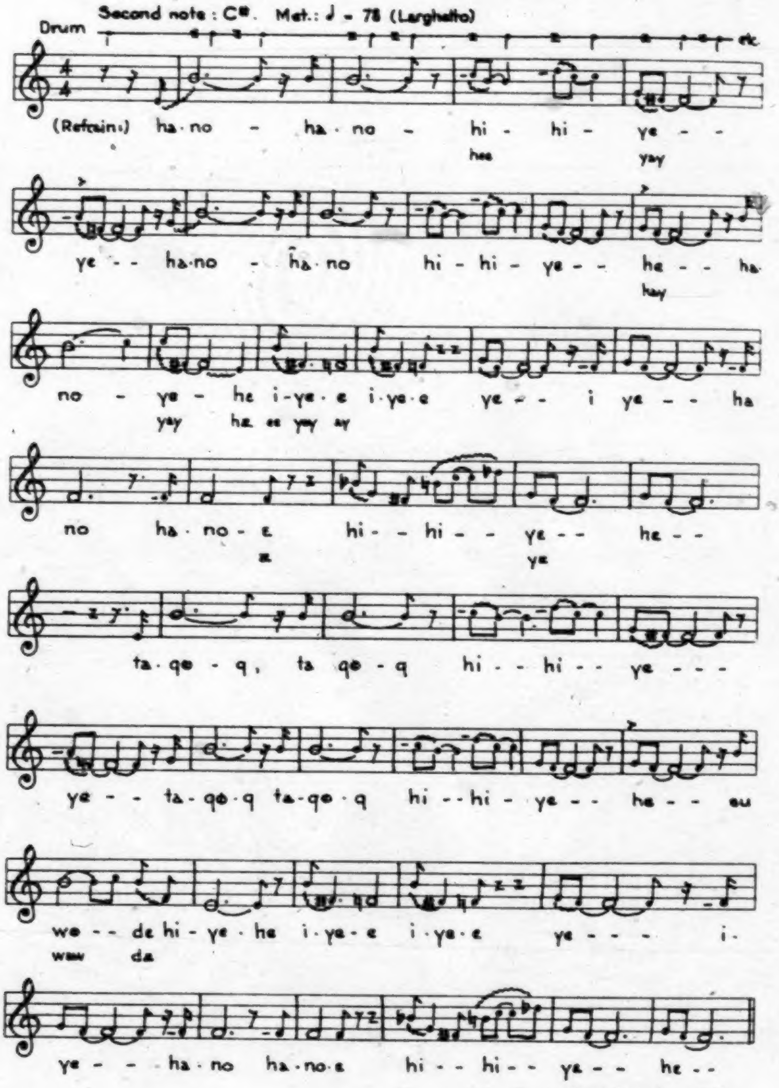
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

[15] Harry Somers, *Kuyas* (Toronto: Berandol Music Ltd., 1971), [p. i].

EXAMPLE 2.1 *Hano*


Second note : C#. Met.: ♩ = 78 (Larghetto)
Drum
etc.
(Refrain:) ha · no – ha · no – hi – hi – ye – –
hee yay
ye – – ha·no – ha · no hi – hi – ye – – he – – ha
hay
no – ye – he i - ye · e i · ye · e ye – – i ye – – ha
yay hε ee yay ay
no ha · no – ε hi – – hi – – ye – – he – –
ε ye
ta · qo – q, ta qo – q hi – – hi – – ye – – –
ye – – ta - qo · q ta - qo · q hi – – hi – ye – – he – – eu
we – – de hi – ye · he i · ye · e i · ye · e ye – – – i ·
waw da
ye – – – ha · no ha · no · ε hi – – hi – – ye – – he – –

Record VII C 124 a (53)

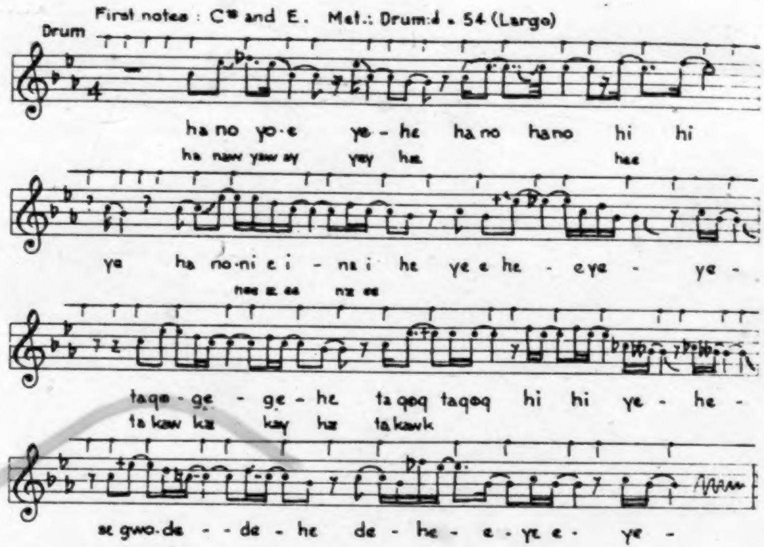
TEXT

han o· hiyε ε . . .

toqo·q *(bis)* | i i ye

suwo·{dehε / det . . .

EXAMPLE 2.2 *Hanawyaw*


First notes : C# and E. Met.: Drum:♩ = 54 (Largo)
Drum
ha no yo·e ye - he ha no hano hi hi
ha naw yaw ay yay ha hee
ye ha no·ni e i - ne i he ye e he - eye - ye -
nee ee ee ne ee
taqe - ge - ge - he ta qeq taqeq hi hi ye - he -
ta kaw ke kay he ta kawk
se gwo·de - - de - he de - he - e - ye e - ye -
se gwo day

Record VIIC 140 a (78)

TEXT

hanoye he ha hano – hăno i iye...
t{ag̣oge / aqeq |[1] ye'ɛ |[2] tag̣o tăg̣o |[3] hihiye
sewó·de |[1] hehɛ |[2] sewo săwo |[3] hiyehehe hanoye ...

music and verse. The project of collecting the songs took on greater importance when the objective became to reveal various phases of Manitoba history in song with commentaries on the historical settings.

The songs in the collection are all local to Red River and Manitoba although some of the music is not. It is instead music from Quebec, or Ontario or Scotland or the American frontier. But there are songs in the collection in which both words and music were completely composed in Red River. These were composed on historical themes and depict actual events. A number of these indigenous songs were composed by Pierre Falcon, who became known as "the Bard of the Prairie Métis," and after whom Falcon Lake in Southeastern Manitoba was named.

Pierre Falcon was born on June 4, 1793, at Elbow Fort, one of the North West Company posts in the Swan and Assiniboine River Valleys. His father worked as a clerk for the company and his mother was an Indian woman of the prairies. In 1799 his father took him to LaPrairie, Quebec, for his education, where he remained until 1808. On his return to Manitoba he also became a clerk for the North West Company. In 1812 Falcon married Mary Grant, sister to the well-known Cuthbert Grant, and lived in the Fort Tremblant district. In 1821 the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies were amalgamated and Falcon continued at his post in the Swan River district under the new Hudson's Bay Company. In 1824 Governor George Simpson established a Métis settlement at White Horse Plain on the Assiniboine River, eighteen miles west of the junction of the Red River, to serve as protection for the Red River Colony against the Indians and to provide a reliable supply of buffalo meat. Simpson chose Cuthbert Grant, a Métis leader, to found the settlement. Grant invited various Métis hunters and fighters, including his brother-in-law Pierre Falcon, to join the settlement by allocating each man a strip farm. The settlement was named Grantown and is known as the present-day St. François Xavier.[16]

In the collection, MacLeod attributes the composition of *The Buffalo Hunt* to Pierre Falcon and dates it from these early years at

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[16] MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, pp. 2, 16-17.

Grantown. In her research in the area of White Horse Plain it was found that a song about the buffalo hunt was recalled to have been composed by Falcon. However, the original French verses have not survived. The words to the song are believed to be a translation of Falcon's simple French text published in *Lords of the North* by Agnes Laut in 1900.[17] Laut's book is a work of fiction and deals with historical characters and events. One of the characters is "Pierre the Rhymester," identifiable as Falcon, who sings a song of his own composition about the buffalo hunt. It is believed that in her research Laut obtained the original French verses from an old Métis and later translated them into English for *Lords of the North.* The greatest part of this song is sufficiently like Falcon's compositions to be considered authentic by Martial Allard, an authority on Falcon's life and work.[18] The verses are set to the air, *Cécilia.*

Falcon's songs mirrored the life of the times around him. He had a dramatic flair for words, a good sense of rhythm, and a love of a lively tune along with a firm belief in the importance of the Métis nation. His songs were known and carried far and wide by the voyageurs on their journeys to and from Montreal.

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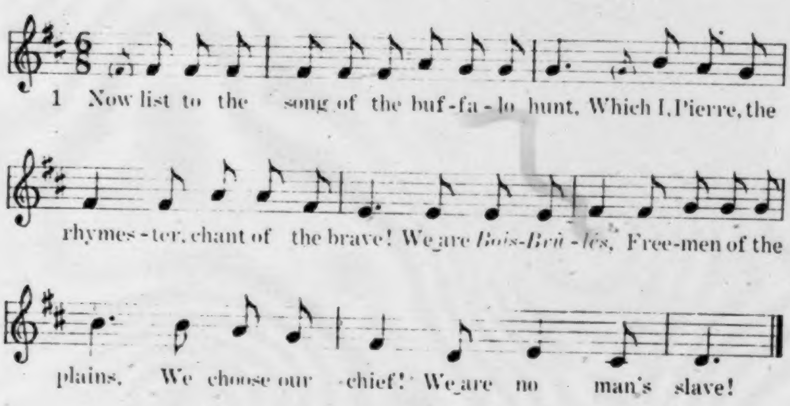
[17] Agnes Laut, *Lords of the North* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1900).

[18] MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, p. 19.

EXAMPLE 2.3 *The Buffalo Hunt*


1 Now list to the song of the buf-fa-lo hunt, Which I, Pierre, the
rhymes-ter, chant of the brave! We are Bois-Brû-lés, Free-men of the
plains, We choose our chief! We are no man's slave!

Now List to the song of the buffalo hunt,
Which I, Pierre, the rhymester, chant of the brave!
We are Bois-Brûlés, Freemen of the plains,
We choose our chief! We are no man's slave!

Up, riders up, ere the early mist
Ascends to salute the rising sun!
Up, rangers up, ere the buffalo herds
Sniff morning air for the hunter's gun!

They lie in their lairs of dank spear-grass,
Down in the gorge, where the prairie dips,
We've followed their tracks through the sucking ooze,
Where our bronchos sank to their steaming hips.

We've followed their tracks from the rolling plains
Through slime-green sloughs to a sedgy ravine,
Where the cat-tail spikes of the march-grown flags
Stand half as high as the billowy green.

The spear-grass touched our saddle-bows,
The blade-points pricked to the broncho's neck;
But we followed the tracks like hounds on scent
Till our horses reared with a sudden check.

The scouts dart back with a shout, "They are found!"
Great fur-maned heads are thrust through the reeds,
A forest of horns, a crunching of stems,
Reined sheer on their haunches are terrified steeds!

Get you gone to the squaws at the tents, old men,
The cart-lines safely encircle the camp!
Now, braves of the plain, brace your saddle-girths!
Quick! Load guns, for our horses champ!

A tossing of horns, a pawing of hoofs,
But the hunters utter never a word,
As the stealthy panther creeps on his prey,
So move we in silence against the herd.

With arrows ready and triggers cocked,
We round them nearer the valley bank;
They pause in defiance, then start with alarm
At the ominous sound of a gun-barrel's clank.

A wave from our captain, out bursts a wild shout,
A crash of shots from our breaking ranks,
And the herd stampedes with a thunderous boom
While we drive our spurs into quivering flanks.

The arrows hiss like a shower of snakes,
The bullets puff in a smoky gust,
Out fly loose reins from the broncho's bits
And hunters ride on in a whirl of dust.

The bellowing bulls rush blind with fear
Through river and marsh, while the trampled dead
Soon bridge a safe ford for the plunging herd;
Earth rocks like a sea 'neath their might tread.

A rip of the sharp-curved sickle-horns,
A hunter falls to the blood-soaked ground!
He is gored and tossed and trampled down;
On dashes the furious beast with a bound.

When over sky-line hulks the last great form
And the rumbling thunder of their hoofs' beat, beat,
Dies like an echo in distant hills,
Back ride the hunters chanting their feat.

Now, old men and wives, come you out with the carts!
There's meat against hunger and fur against cold!
Gather full store for the pemmican bags,
Garner the booty of warriors bold.

So list the song of the Bois-Brûlés,
Of their glorious deeds in the days of old,
And this is the tale of the buffalo hunt
Which I, Pierre, the rhymester, have proudly told.

Attributed to Agnes Laut
(From *Lords of the North*, The Ryerson Press)

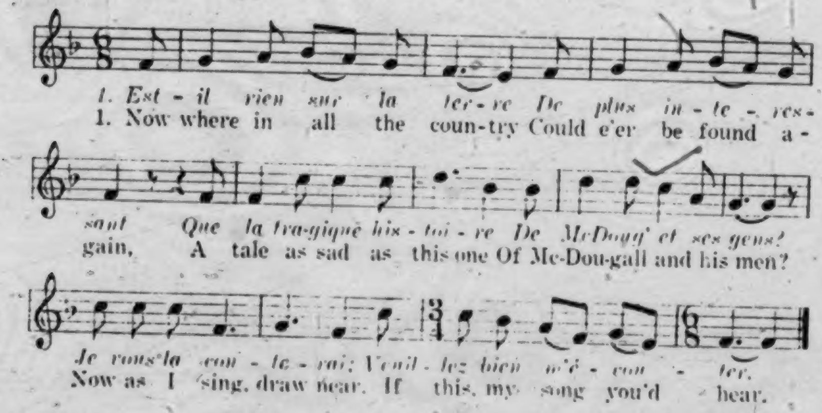
Le Roi Malheureux or *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux* (Misfortunes of an Unlucky King) is the second folk song from the MacLeod collection. It is a French folk song, with text by Pierre Falcon, set to the air *The Wandering Jew*. Falcon composed this work in 1869. By this time he was a prominent and respected citizen of Grantown and the Magistrate in the District of White Horse Plain. The events which led to his writing of *Misfortunes of an Unlucky King* were in direct reaction to the Canadian Government's tactless preparations to take over the North West, the situation which prompted Louis Riel to come forward. The plot of the opera's opening scenes take place at this precise moment.

The Hudson Bay Company's rights to Rupert's Land had expired, and the sale of the territory to Canada was in the process of being negotiated. Surveyors were prematurely sent out in August 1869 by the Canadian government without informing the people of Red River. To add further insult, the government sent William McDougall in readiness to assume the governorship of the territory to the American border where he was to await final instructions. In the meantime the Métis were greatly incensed that their lands were being surveyed and felt their rights were threatened. Louis Riel became the leader of the Métis and on November second, he and his men seized Upper Fort Garry and set up a provisional government with Riel as Secretary. McDougall waited at the American border until December first for orders from Ottawa which never arrived. He then attempted to assume the governorship of the territory with a forged proclamation. The Métis met this event with a proclamation of their own signed by Riel, prohibiting McDougall's entry into the territory. They set up a barricade and were determined to fight if necessary to protect their land.

Falcon was greatly moved by this turn of events and though, too old to join his fellow Métis in arms, wrote a song about the crisis. *Misfortunes of an Unlucky King* was Falcon's last song, as he died at White Horse Plain on October 26, 1876. Other folk songs and texts by Falcon include *The Battle of Seven Oaks*, and *The Dickson Song*. Though these works may be primitive, they are the product of a primitive environment and may be unique in that both the words and music originated in Red River.

The words of *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux*, were recalled by the grandchildren of Falcon and written down by Henry Caron of Winnipeg. The folk song appears in the opera in Act I, scene iii, with the opening text, "Est-il rien sur la terre."

EXAMPLE 2.4 *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux*


1. Est - il rien sur la ter - re De plus in - te - res -
1. Now where in all the coun-try Could e'er be found a -
sant Que la tra-gique his - toi - re De McDoug' et ses gens?
gain, A tale as sad as this one Of Mc-Dou-gall and his men?
Je vous la con - te - rai; Veuil - lez bien m'é - cou - ter.
Now as I sing, draw near. If this, my song you'd hear.

1. Est-il rien sur la terre
De plus intéressant
Que la tragique histoire
De McDoug' et ses gens?
Je vous la conterai;
Veuillez bien m'écouter.

2. Sur notre territoire,
Devenu ses Etats,
Il venait ce bon père,
Régner en potentat,
Ainsi l'avait réglé
Le Ministre Cartier.

3. Le coeur gros d'espérance,
Partant du Canada
Il dit: "J'ai confiance
Qu'on vivra bien là-bas.
Ah! quel bonheur! ma foi!
Je suis donc enfin Roi!"

4. Comptant sur les richesses
Qu'il trouverait chez nous,
Il eut la maladresse
De ne pas prendre un sou,
Par même pour traverser
Un pays etranger.

5. Il paraît que l'orage,
Dans son gouvernement,
Durant tout le voyage,
Eclata fort souvent,
L'union qui rend plus fort
Etait loin de ce corps.

6. Mais, malgré la tempête
Cameron à son bord
Voulait décrire la fête
Qui L'attendait à port;
Et la voir imprimée
Avant qu'elle fût passée.

7. Ce ministre fidèle
Etant loin de prévoir
Qu'elle ne serait pas telle
Qu'il avait cru la voir-
Funeste illusion!
Quelle déception!

8. Déjà de son royaume
Le sol il va toucher,
Quand tout à coup un homme
Lui défend d'avancer,
Lui disant "Mon ami
C'est assez loin d'ici."

9. Etonné de l'audace
De ces hardis mortels,
Il emploie les menaces
Pour vaincre ces rebelles;
Mais cela fut en vain,
Il ne put gagner rien.

10. Obligé de reprendre
La voie du Canada
Il lui faudra attendre
De l'argent pour cela;
Car, pour manger ici
Il prend tout à crédit.

11. Aujourd'hui sa couronne
Est un songe passé;
Le trône qu'on lui donne
C'est un trône percé,
Mais il dit qu'à présent
Il est bien suffisant.

12. Aujourd'hui que va dire
Monsieur le Gouvernement?
Sera-t-il noir de rire
Quand il verra ses plans
Déjà tous culbutés
Par les Bois-Brûlés?

Pierre Falcon

Misfortunes of an Unlucky "King"

1. Now where in all the country
Could e'er be found again,
A tale as sad as this one
Of McDougall and his men?
Now as I sing, draw near,
If this, my song, you'd hear.

2. He journeyed to our region -
He thought it his estate;
The good man there would govern
Like an Eastern potentate;
This land for him was free,
By Cartier's decree.

3. From Canada he started;
His heart with hope did swell;
With confidence he stated,
"Out there we'll all live well,
With joy and rapture sing,
At last I am a king."

4. Out here he would discover
Wealth equal to his greed;
And so he brought not with him
One cent for buying feed,
Though through a foreign land,
He'd have to lead his band.

5. While on the trip all order
By angry words was rent;
This storm and strife prevented
Harmonious government.
The strong need to agree
For solidarity.

6. Discounting then the tempest,
A man named Cameron
Described the happy welcome
He thought that they had won -
He saw as history
What still was yet to be.

7. This minister so faithful
Was far from finding out,
That facts as he foretold them
Would never come about;
Delusions he would know -
Illusions turned to woe!

8. His kingdom lies before him,
He starts to enter it;
A man cries out to stop there-
"This thing we'll not permit;
My friend, you need not fear
Provided you stop here."

9. Astonished by the firmness
Of rebels brave and bold,
With threats he tries to conquer
"You'll do as you are told."
His actions are in vain -
He won't have his domain.

10. To Canada he'll hasten,
It's all that he can do,
But first he'll send for money
And wait till it comes through;
Meanwhile they have to eat;
On credit they buy meat.

11. In dreams he wears a crown still
And never knows defeat;
The only throne he has now
Has a hole cut in the seat;
And this today he owns;
He needs no other thrones.

12. As soon as the officials
Find out their plan fell through
Will they turn black with
laughter?
Will they know what to do?
They did not have their way,
Thanks to the Bois-Brûlés!

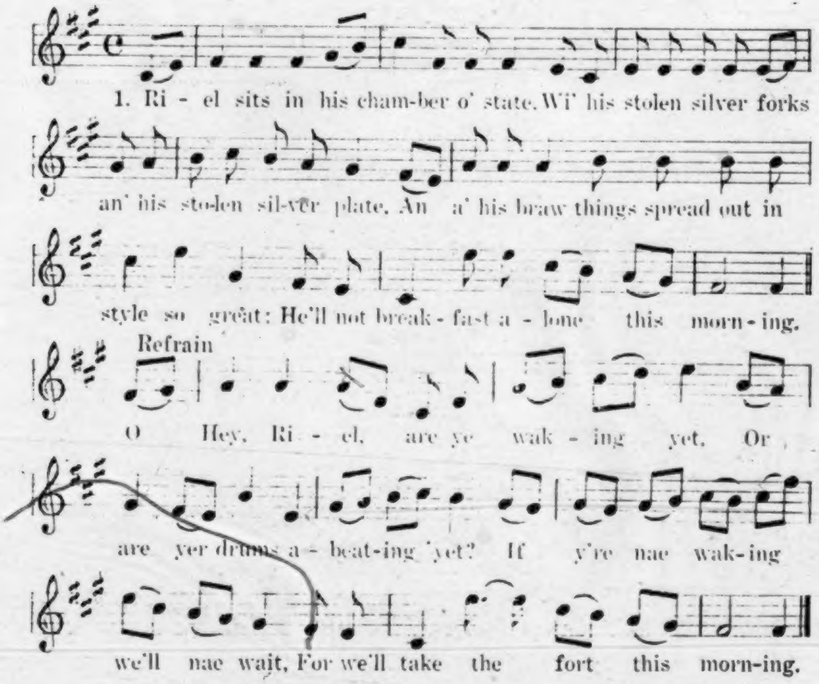
Pierre Falcon
Translated by Robert L. Walters

The third song from the MacLeod collection is *The Marching Song* with one verse and chorus composed by Alexander Hunt Murray, a retired Hudson's Bay Company officer. The text is set to the traditional Scottish air, *Johnny Cope.* The manuscript of the song was found in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg.

The song was composed for the occasion of February 15, 1870, when about two hundred Red River inhabitants gathered at St. Andrew's for the fifteen-mile march on Upper Fort Garry in order to free their English-speaking comrades who were being held prisoner by Riel. Murray parodied the words of the traditional Scottish song, *Johnny Cope* and the verse and chorus were quickly learned by the marchers. The group continued to Kildonan where they were to be joined by a contingent of sixty men from Portage la Prairie. Opposition to the plan was put forth by the clergy at Kildonan, consisting of the Reverend John Black, Bishop Machray and the Reverend A. Cowley, who feared bloodshed would occur between the English and French settlers. They counselled negotiations be undertaken with Riel and finally won over the opposing group. Eventually most of the prisoners were released from Fort Garry, but the Portage party, enroute home, were captured and made prisoners by Riel's men.

The opening text of the song is also the opening of the opera in the pre-recorded Introduction. It also plays an important motivic role in the work, undergoing transformations throughout the entire opera.

EXAMPLE 2.5 *The Marching Song*


1. Ri - el sits in his cham-ber o' state. Wi' his stolen silver forks
an' his sto-len sil-ver plate. An a' his braw things spread out in
style so great: He'll not break - fast a - lone this morn - ing.
Refrain
O Hey, Ri - el, are ye wak - ing yet, Or
are yer drums a - beat-ing yet? If y're nae wak-ing
we'll nae wait, For we'll take the fort this morn-ing.

Riel sits in his chamber o' state
Wi' his stolen silver forks an' his stolen silver plate,
An' a' his braw things spread out in style so great;
He'll not breakfast alone this morning.

O Hey, Riel, are ye waking yet,
Or are yer drums a-beating yet?
If y're nae waking we'll nae wait,
For we'll take the fort this morning.

Alexander Hunter Murray.

The source for the song *We'll Hang Him up the River*, is from the play *Riel* by John Coulter.[19] Librettist Mavor Moore was first introduced to it when he played the title role in the first production in 1947. The words and music were transcribed by Dr. Healey Willan from a version that Coulter recalled from his youth in Ireland. In the play it follows a mob scene, scene vii, which is staged at night with torches and bonfires. The drums of the Orangemen can be heard in the background. The approaching mob swarms on stage yelling and shouting phrases such as "Hang Riel!" "Murder in Red River!" "Revenge for Thomas Scott!" In the morning scene, Scene viii, set in the Fort Garry Precincts, one of the characters is standing outside reading sensational headlines from a newspaper: "Hang Riel!" "Revenge for Thomas Scott!" and "All Ontario Ablaze!" "We'll Hang Him up the River ..." and then continues singing the song.[20]

In the opera *We'll Hang Him up the River* appears in a crowd scene, Act II, scene IV, at the end of Act II sung offstage, and after the Riel trial scene, Act II, scene vi, where it depicts the crowd's thirst for blood.

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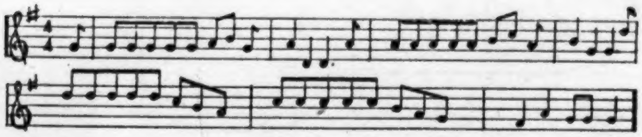
[19] Coulter, *Riel*, p. 39.

[20] *Ibid*.

EXAMPLE 2.6 *We'll Hang Him up the River*



We'll hang him up the river/with your yah, yah, yah!
We'll hang him up the river/with your yah, yah, yah!
We'll hang him up the river
And he'll roast in hell for ever/with your yah, yah, yah,
Yah! Yah! Yah!

As can be seen from the preceding examples, a significant portion of Somers' score deals with Native-Indian folk materials and with French and English popular songs. These folk songs are all based on transcriptions of material handed down from one generation to another and preserved in the collections examined. In the following chapters the songs will be looked at in greater detail as they appear in the completed score of the opera.

CHAPTER III

NATIVE-INDIAN FOLK MUSIC

The category of Native-Indian folk music is a very prominent one in the score of the opera. The most important example is that of Marguerite's aria *Kuyas* drawn from the music of the Indians of the North West coast. Though originally the song was a lament, Somers makes use of it as a lullaby for Marguerite. While expanding on the texts, he retains the original meaning of the lament for the passing of a people and their leader. In the other example of Native-Indian music at the beginning of the final scene of Act II, Somers creates a completely primitive musical image with the two Indian Dances. The second of these is *The Buffalo Hunt* of Pierre Falcon, but in a greatly expanded version which includes solo voice, male and female choruses and the full complement of all the available forces. Further examples of the Native-Indian element in the opera are in the uses of percussion and particular instrumental ensembles along with motivic uses for the purposes of the drama. The latter category will be looked at in the final chapter.

Brief History and Stylistic Characteristics

In the nineteenth century numerous Indian songs and dances were transcribed and published. Through these early publications the interest of musicologists was aroused and the scholarly research and analysis of Indian music was begun.

In 1882, Theodore Baker wrote a doctoral dissertation on the music of the North American Indians.[1] The work was greeted with enthusiasm and acclaim for it dealt with an unknown quantity, a field as yet undiscovered by the civilized European culture to which it was introduced.

A century later the music of the Native-Indian people is still relatively unknown; however, the many studies made in this field have brought to light a rich and varied musical culture. Stylistic differences in the manner of singing, use of instruments, types of songs and dances between tribes, have been delineated with care and precision by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. Collections and studies of these abound. A brief sampling of such works might include the studies of some of the well-known collectors: Franz Boas, Frances Densmore, Natalie Curtis, Bruno Nettl, Marius Barbeau, and in more recent years Mieczyslaw Kolinski, Robert Cogan and Charlotte Heth.

It is also important to look at some of the stylistic characteristics of Native-Indian music.[2] The most prominent feature of the music is that the songs and dances of the people were usually accorded a spiritual significance and this musical heritage was interwoven in their daily lives. Songs were used to accompany particular functions, an example of "music for use." Or the songs belonged to particular people and could be used only on special occasions involving these people. Many of the Indian tribes used untranslatable syllables rather than words in their songs, although this practice varied from group to group. Other tribes had song cycles of hundreds of individual songs to accompany a particular ritual or celebration, often of a religious nature. Composition of songs was not something ordinarily engaged in, as a song was considered to be a gift gained in a vision or a spontaneous piece suddenly remembered. The oral musical tradition therefore carried many variants of the same song which were passed down from generation to generation:

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[1] Theodore Baker, *Uber die Musik der Nordamerikanischen Wilden*, Reprint of the 1882 edition (New York: AMS Press, 1973).

[2] Bruno Nettl, "Studies in Blackfoot Indian Musical Culture," Parts I, II, III, and IV, *Ethnomusicology* 11(2), pp. 141-60, 1967; 11(3), pp. 293-309, 1967; 12(1), pp. 11-41, 1968; and 12(2), pp. 192-207, 1968.

> The importance of American Indian music is found ... in the traditions and values it expresses to and for the Indian people. This oral tradition has survived solely because the music was too important to be allowed to die.[3]

Kuyas

The song *Kuyas* was commissioned by the International Institute of Music of Canada for a competition in 1967 under a grant from Canada Council. The work was completed in April and then incorporated into the opera *Louis Riel* as the aria sung by Marguerite at the beginning of Act III. It is the only excerpt from the opera which has been published.[4]

The work is scored for solo voice, flute and a percussion ensemble consisting of sleigh bells, medium-pitch tom-tom, tenor drum and bass drum. Although a number of sources designate it for soprano,

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[3] Charlotte Heth, "Songs of Earth, Water, Fire and Sky: Music of the American Indians," Programme Notes (New World Records, NW 246 Stereo).

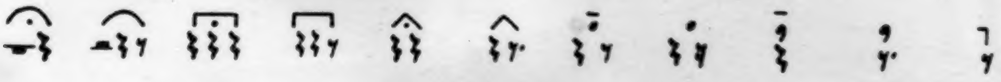
[4] Harry Somers, *Kuyas* (Scarborough, Ont.: Berandol Music, 1971).

Somers himself states that it is transposable:

> This version is essentially in the soprano range. For others, they may modulate to whatever range suits their voice best, e.g. coloratura could commence a fourth higher, alto a minor third lower, contralto a major fourth or fifth lower, tenors a tone lower, (as written) baritones an octave lower than alto, and bass an octave lower than contralto. In each case indicate to the flutist before-hand what is the singers top note and he will modulate accordingly.[5]

Somers also designates eleven types of *fermata* which are used in the Introduction and third section of the song. These indicate eleven degrees of pause from long to short with indications of their relative duration in normal notation (Example 3.1). Despite these careful instructions, he further states that the *fermata* may be used strictly or freely according to "the performers' feeling and sensibility during the moment of performance."[6]

EXAMPLE 3.1 *Fermatas* in Somers, *Kuyas*



The preface to the score also gives a key to pronounciation of the text, which is in Cree Indian. Somers was assisted with the pronounciation and feeling for the language by Lou Waller, a Cree Indian from Alberta, and later dedicated the work to her. According to the pronounciation key, the word *Kuyas* would be pronounced Ku (as in mutt) - yas (as in mat). In a subsequent recording the word was pronounced

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. [ii].

[6] *Ibid.*,

Kōōyahs, which led Somers to consider revising the phonetics according to symbols used in the International Phonetic Alphabet in order to make them more clear.[7]

The formal structure of *Kuyas* is closely related to the different texts upon which it is based. The work is sectional, consisting of an Introduction followed by four parts with varying tempo indications: *Molto Lento, Più Mosso, Allegro (Molto)/Presto*, and *Molto Lento*. The slow outer sections are indicative of the lamenting quality of the texts. The quicker middle sections describe a hunt and the various animals of the wilderness. The final section, *Kuyas*, means long ago and is a lament for the passing of a great chief and of his people. This meaning for the song is consistent with the original source, *Hano*, which was also a lament for the death of a chief. These changing texts define the sections and clearly influenced Somers in his choice of tempo indications.

The Introduction consists of vocables or untranslatable syllables, Hano, â-o, yī-e, ī-e, â, which express the sounds of the lament. These are taken directly from the original Nass River folk song with a few variations. There is a syllable, â-o, replacing the hi-hi-ye of measures three and four. These syllables are later used by Somers but with the pronounciation yī (as in mite) -e (as in meet) ī-e ī-e.

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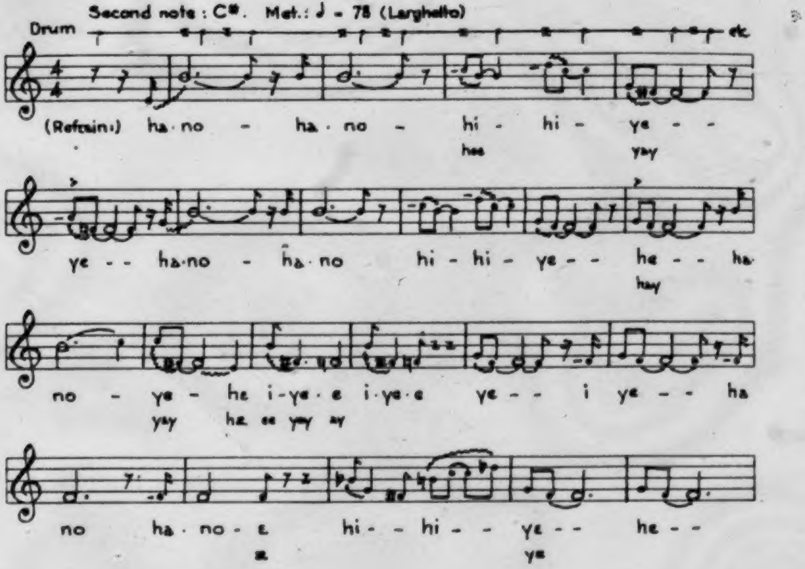
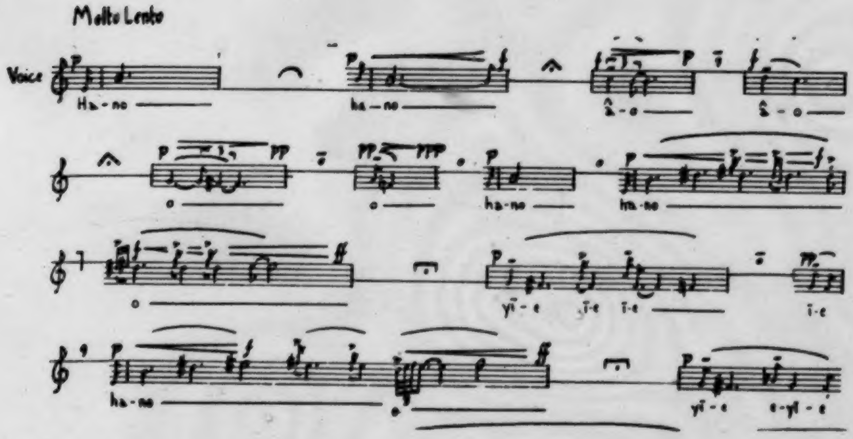
[7] Diane Houghton, *The Solo Vocal Works of Harry Somers* (DMA University of Missouri, Kansas City, 1980), pp. 100-101; Recording of *Kuyas*, Gwendolyn Killebrew, Mezzo-soprano (CBC CT-35237).

EXAMPLE 3.2 *Hano*


Second note : C#. Met.: ♩ = 78 (Larghetto)
Drum
etc.
(Refrain:) ha-no - ha-no - hi - hi - ye - -
hee yay
ye - - ha-no - ha-no hi - hi - ye - - he - - ha
hay
no - ye - he i-ye-e i-ye-e ye - - i ye - - ha
yay he ee yay ay
no ha-no-e hi - - hi - - ye - - he - -

EXAMPLE 3.3 *Kuyas*


Molto Lento
Voice
Ha-no
ha-no
â-o
â-o
o
o
ha-no
ha-no
o
yi-e
î-e
î-e
î-e
ha-no
e
yi-e
e-yi-e

The remaining sections are in Cree Indian and are translated as follows:[8]

---

[8] Somers, *Kuyas*, p. [iii].

Kuyas	*Long Ago*

Introduction. *Molto Lento*

Hano, â-o, yī-e, ī-e, â	(Untranslatable syllables)
Sâkâstāo	It is sunrise.

1. *Più Mosso*

Numoowunaw.	It is fair wind
Kēsamuneto,	Great Spirit,
Numoowunootao.	He walks with fair wind.
Kēsamuneto,	Great Spirit,
Numoowunasāo.	He sails with fair wind.

2. *Allegro (Molto)/Presto*

"Kēsamuneto,	"Great Spirit,
ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
ne-yu ka notāutāyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen.	Will hunt.
Ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
Ne-yu ka notāutāyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen -	Will hunt -
muskwâ	bear.
Ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
ne-yu ka notāutāyan -	I who am hungry -
âmisk	Beaver
Ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
mooswâ	moose
Ne-yu -	I -
wâpoos	rabbit
Ka -	Who -
uppische moos-soos	jumping deer
notāyutāyan -	am hungry -
âhtik	caribou
Ka, ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
ne-yu ka notāutāyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen -	will hunt -
wâwâskāsēo.	elk.

3. *Molto Lento*

Kēsamuneto	Great spirit
Pu'kisimoo	Sunset
Mēkisāo	An eagle

4.

Kuyas,	Long ago,
Kuyas,	Long ago,
Āwuko ā ke okimawit	That one was a chief
Kuyas	Long ago
Kisāyinewu.	Among old men.
Āwuko kuyas achimoowin.	This is an old story.
Āwuko	This
otu uskek	In this land
ka pā'tuman	Is what I heard
omu achimoowin.	This story.
Kuyas,	Long ago
Kuyas	Long ago
Āwuko ā ke okimawit	That one was a chief
Kuyas.	Long ago.

As can be seen from the Examples 3.2 and 3.3 above, Somers follows the opening of the original folk song very closely. In commenting on it in the CBC radio broadcast of *Louis Riel*, he said that he considered the opening motive of five or six notes to be "extraordinarily beautiful and just used that as a basic structure on which I developed the whole song.[9] The basic motivic ideas are set in frames separated by the various types of *fermata*. Since the performer has the freedom of interpretation and is virtually unaccompanied in the Introduction (percussion is briefly introduced after the seventeenth frame), this lends an improvisatory character to the work.

The quality of improvisation is further enhanced by the use of ornamentation. Melismas, falling pitches, *glissandos* and small ornaments all contribute to a distinct melodic style and heighten emotional impact.[10] This is consistent with the Native-Indian folk element which plays such an important role in the melodic line. The use of ornamentation can be seen in the original folk melody, which opens with sixteenth-note ornaments and falling pitches. Another interesting ornamental feature is the use of *glissandos*. In the original score these are frequently indicated in both ascending and descending versions. The *glissandos* occur in varying degrees of interval from a second up to a fifth and contain all the intervening quarter-tone pitches. An intensification of ornamentation occurs in *Kuyas* on the word *Sâkâstāo*, (It is sunrise) at which point the instrumental accompaniment makes its first appearance in the work. The music again subsides with falling pitches and the Introduction ends with the opening syllables, âo and hano.

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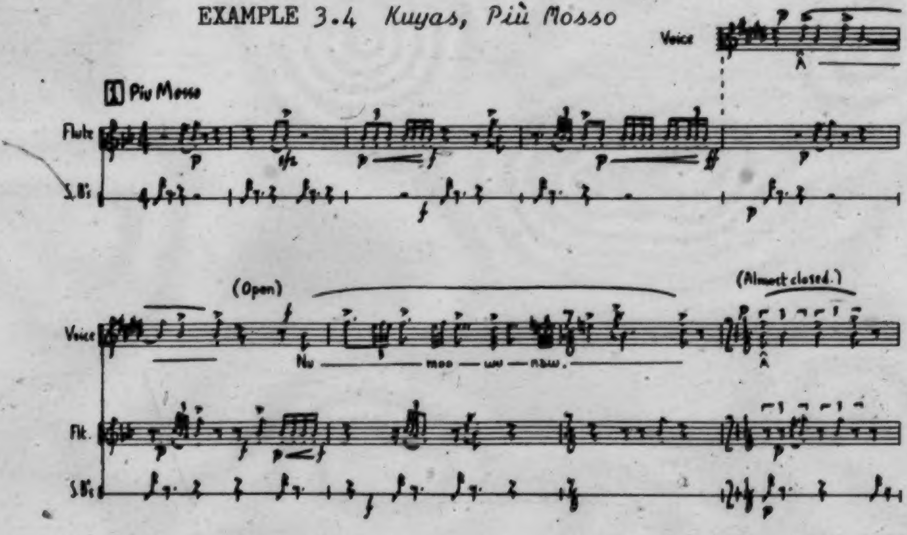
[9] Harry Somers, *Louis Riel* (Canadian Opera Company), Sound tapes in possession of Canadian Music Centre, Calgary, Alberta.

[10] Frances Smith, *An Analysis of Selected Works by Harry Somers* (M. Mus. Thesis, University of Western Ontario, London, 1973), p. 85.

The accompaniment of sleigh bells and flute begins with a brief instrumental interlude at the beginning of the first section. The repetition of one note in decreasing note values in the flute anticipates the voice part, which also contains the frequent reiteration of a single note.

EXAMPLE 3.4 *Kuyas, Più Mosso*



The use of the sleigh bells also adds a rather haunting quality reminiscent of Indian rites. Somers notated key signatures of B flat and A flat for the flute, and F sharp, C sharp, E sharp, and D sharp in the voice for this section. Although key signatures are not a regular feature of Somers' music, he used them in this instance because he felt they were consistent throughout the *Più Mosso* section.[11]

The rhythmic drive associated with Native-Indian music becomes more apparent in the first and second sections of the work. The *Più Mosso* contains varying time signatures of 4/4, 7/8, 2 + 1/8, 3/4, and 2/4. The *Allegro (Molto)/Presto* continues with this trend including a 5/8 time signature. The rhythmic drive is particularly effective at this increased tempo as the voice part describes the urgency of the hunt with a heavily-accented reiterated note which continues for thirteen measures with only a few small deviations.

The medium tom-tom is introduced in the *Allegro* section and along with the sleigh bells provides a percussion accompaniment. An *accelerando* section begins six measures before the end of the section which turns into a *Presto* for the duration of one measure and then slowly decreases in tempo to prepare the return of the slow outer parts.

The *Molto Lento* of the third section is reminiscent of the Introduction and makes use of the improvisatory style with *fermatas* and frames rather than the specified time signatures. The accompanying instruments do not make their appearance until the beginning of the fourth and final section when a tenor drum beat introduces the voice part on "Kuyas". The melody and rhythm are a culmination of what has gone before. The music contains small sixteenth-note ornaments, single-reiterated patterns, varying time signatures and frequent *glissandos*. The piece closes very softly with a descending *glissando* on "Kuyas" and the bass drum percussion is heard at the very end.

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[11] Houghton, *Solo Vocal Works*, p. 102.

The whole mood of Marguerite's aria is one of lament and impending tragedy for the passing of her people and their chief, Riel. The motivic uses of *Kuyas* recur in the remainder of the scene as well as the work in melodic fragments of ornamentation and the unusual combination of the instrumental ensemble. These motivic uses musically portray Riel's struggle with his sense of mission and of his desire to remain with his family. This is one of the most hauntingly beautiful and moving scenes in the entire work. A fitting commentary on Somers' use of folk material in *Kuyas* was made by Ernest MacMillan:

> ... Harry Somers in *Riel* made effective use of a Barbeau west coast Indian song ... set to Cree words and "transplanted" to Montana. This original song ... was a lament for a chief ... not a lullaby as in the opera. But Harry has used it effectively and well, I think.[12]

The Buffalo Hunt

Another signficant portion of Native-Indian music incorporated in the opera consists of two Indian songs and dances. In these dance-songs, which form the Introduction to Act II, scene vi, Somers has contrasted the image of a primitive, uncivilized society with that of the sophisticated Eastern setting in the previous scene. The primitive character of the scene is also noted in Somers' performance instructions at the beginning of the scene:

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[12] Ernest MacMillan, "Some Reminiscences of Marius Barbeau," *Musicanada* (April 1969) No. 18, pp. 11, 16.

> Solo Voice will always start each new musical sentence ... others may join in as it progresses.[13] Voices to perform with an excessive vibrato and a breath accent on virtually every note.
> The short yells which occur throughout, can either be like the high pitched bark of a dog, or the hoot or cry of some bird ... they can occur somewhat at random, but no more frequent than the number indicated.[14]

The first Indian Dance provides a vivid musical portrait of the scenes of the West: the group of Indians chanting, dancing, the use of tom-toms with yells and hoots for accompaniments. However, as this work is not based on an original source, but is a composition by Somers in the style of Native-Indian folk music, it will be looked at in greater detail in a later chapter.

The second of the Indian dances, *The Buffalo Hunt*, is based upon the words and music of the song by Pierre Falcon. The buffalo hunt was a part of the daily life of the West for both the Indian and the Métis. The hunt provided the basic staple food upon which the community depended and was an undertaking of extreme importance. The hunt was also in effect the organizing force behind the first form of government the Métis knew. Their ability to organize and to govern themselves was not doubt a crucial factor in their call to arms during the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 and the subsequent rebellions of 1869 and 1885.[15]

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[13] This is in the manner of performance practice of the Plains Indians. See Charlotte Heth, "Songs of Earth, Water, Fire and Sky."

[14] Harry Somers, *Louis Riel*, Act II, scene vi.

[15] MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, pp. 16-17.

That Falcon composed a song about this significant event is also consistent with Native-Indian musical traditions in which songs were always associated with particular functions and especially those requiring luck and good fortune.[16] The song of the buffalo hunt dates from Falcon's early years at Grantown and was probably composed about 1825. Somers chose this early Falcon song to portray the wild and primitive setting of the West and included it as part of the Indian-dance songs in the opera.

The Buffalo Hunt in Somers' version uses six verses of the original sixteen as follows (the placement of the verse in its original version is given in brackets):

1. (1) Now list to the song of the buffalo hunt,
Which I, Pierre, the rhymester, chant of the brave!
We are Bois-Brûlés, Freemen of the Plains,[17]
We choose our chief! We are no man's slave!

2. (2) Up, riders up, ere the early mist
Ascends to salute the rising sun!
Up, ranging up, ere the Buffalo herds
Sniff morning air for the hunter's gun!

3. (11) The arrows hiss like a shower of snakes,
The bullets puff in a smoky gust,
Out fly loose reins from the Broncho's bits
And hunters ride on in a whirl of dust.

4. (12) The bellowing bulls rush blind with fear
Through river and marsh, while the trampled dead
Soon bridge a safe ford for the plunging herd,
Earth rocks like a sea 'neath their mighty tread.

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[16] Bruno Nettl, "Studies in Blackfoot Musical Culture," Part I, *Ethnomusicology* II(2) 1967, pp. 141-160.

[17] Bois-Brûlés means "burnt wood" and was an appellation the Métis themselves preferred. See also: Rudy Wiebe, *The Scorched-Wood People* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1977).

5. (14) When over sky-line hulks the last great form
And the rumbling thunder of their hoofs' beat, beat,
Dies like an echo in distant hills,
Back ride the hunters chanting their feat.

6. (16) So list ye the song of the Bois-Brûlés,
Of their glorious deeds in the days of old,
And this is the tale of the buffalo hunt
Which I, Pierre, the rhymester, have proudly told.

The verses are set strophically with a variety of accompaniments ranging from hand clapping to the full orchestral forces. The Introduction and five instrumental interludes of increasing complexity divide the strophes. The verses are set differently each time, both vocally and instumentally. The vocal settings vary from solo male voice to duet, male chorus, female chorus, solo male voice and SATB chorus.

The Introduction consists of highly rhythmic and strongly accented hand clapping with constantly changing metres. Somers' performance instructions are that "One of the Mêtis starts the hand clapping, others pick it up." The tempo indication is Moderate (but lively) and he specifies the "Male voice. Preferably a lyric baritone with a tenor quality." Once the voice begins the rhythmic melody, Somers adds: "The stamping of feet in the dance can be an intrinsic part of the rhythmic conception."[18] The addition of yells and hoots in the instrumental interludes are a continuation of these from the first Indian dance, and complete the image of the wild West.

Somers' rhythmic concept of *The Buffalo Hunt* is one of great interest for both increasing the rhythmic drive and vitality of the music and at the same time creating a much more savage and earthy sound than the original folk song contained.

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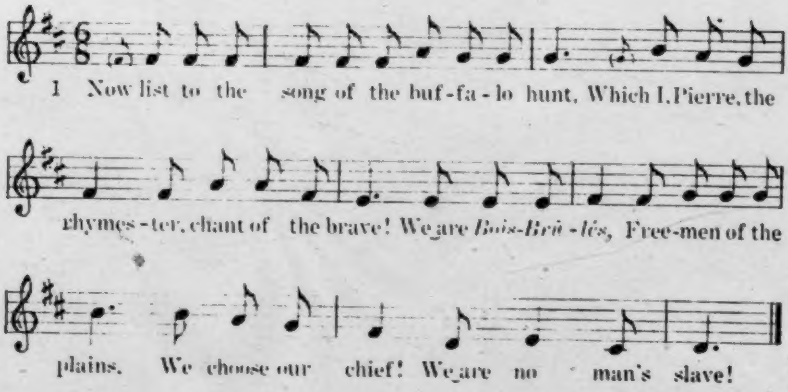
[18] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Act II, scene vi.

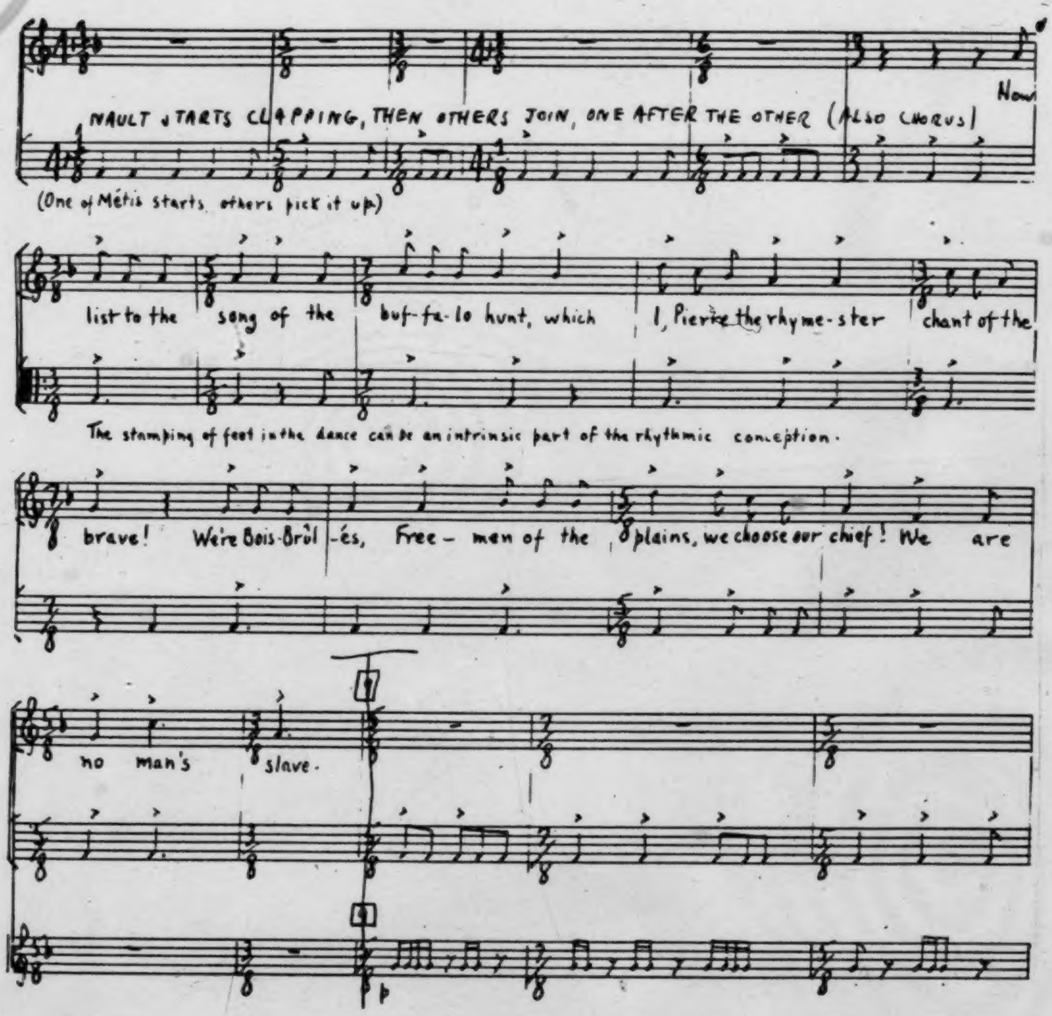
In the original source, the music was adapted from the air *Cécilia*. It is cast in a lively 6/8 metre with its typically lilting rhythm and contains a regular three eighth-note upbeat to each of its four phrases:

EXAMPLE 3.5 *The Buffalo Hunt*


1 Now list to the song of the buf-fa-lo hunt, Which I, Pierre, the
rhymes-ter, chant of the brave! We are *Bois-Brû-lés*, Free-men of the
plains. We choose our chief! We are no man's slave!

The rhythmic differences of Somers' version are immediately apparent with the opening metre of 4 + 1/8, followed by 5/8, 3/8, 4 + 1/8, 6/8 and 3. Since the opening measure is unaccented it provides an ambiguous beginning which could easily be construed as 4/4 common time until the final eighth-note rhythm disturbs that impression. The next three measures are strongly accented on the down beat to indicate some stability in an otherwise perplexing rhythm. At the 6/8 and following measures the accenting becomes even more frequent and frantic in both the voice and accompaniment.

EXAMPLE 3.6 *The Buffalo Hunt*, Act II, scene vi


NAULT STARTS CLAPPING, THEN OTHERS JOIN, ONE AFTER THE OTHER (ALSO CHORUS)
(One of Métis starts, others pick it up)
How list to the song of the buf-fa-lo hunt, which I, Pierre the rhyme-ster chant of the
The stamping of feet in the dance can be an intrinsic part of the rhythmic conception.
brave! We're Bois-Brûl-és, Free-men of the plains, we choose our chief! We are
no man's slave.
7
4
p

The ambiguity of the metre at the opening along with the irregular rhythms and accenting result in a driving, nervous rhythm which heightens the tension and aptly provides the setting for the text of the song. In the opinion of this author, it was Somers' intention to create a work in which the tension is increased through a multitude of means in order to portray the heightened excitement and activity of the hunt itself.

The differences employed by Somers in contrast to the simple straightforward melody of the original song are a starting point. The original source gives the key signature of D Major. In Somers' arrangement the song is set a third higher with the key signature of F Major. However, ambiguity is again apparent in the avoidance of a final cadence on the tonic (measures 16 and 17). The melody also rises a fourth on a prolonged and accented dotted-quarter note before settling down to the opening note "A" on the words: "No man's slave!" The prolongation of the "C" and the strongly accented raised ending on this text, creates quite a belligerent stance for the singer.

The entire first verse contains no instrumental accompaniment whatever and is accompanied only by the hand clapping and stamping of feet. The solo unaccompanied voice is a typical practice of the opening verse of folk music. The first instrumental interlude consists of four measures of violins on a reiterated single-note pattern in intricate changing metric patterns. To add to the tonal ambiguity and unsettled quality, the violins' single note is "G".

The second verse is set for two male voices with instructions that "Hand clapping repeats same sequence throughout, otherwise might drop out for some verses and then repeat."[20] The violins maintain the reiterated single-note pattern on "G" throughout the entire second verse, creating a constant tension which is barely alleviated by a few pizzicato notes by the cello.

Each instrumental interlude is accompanied with yells and hoots as in the first Indian Dance. The instruments play in nervous, staccato, reiterated-note patterns, or alterations on neighbouring notes with increasing accents. This second interlude is expanded instrumentally with the use of trumpets and bass trombone.

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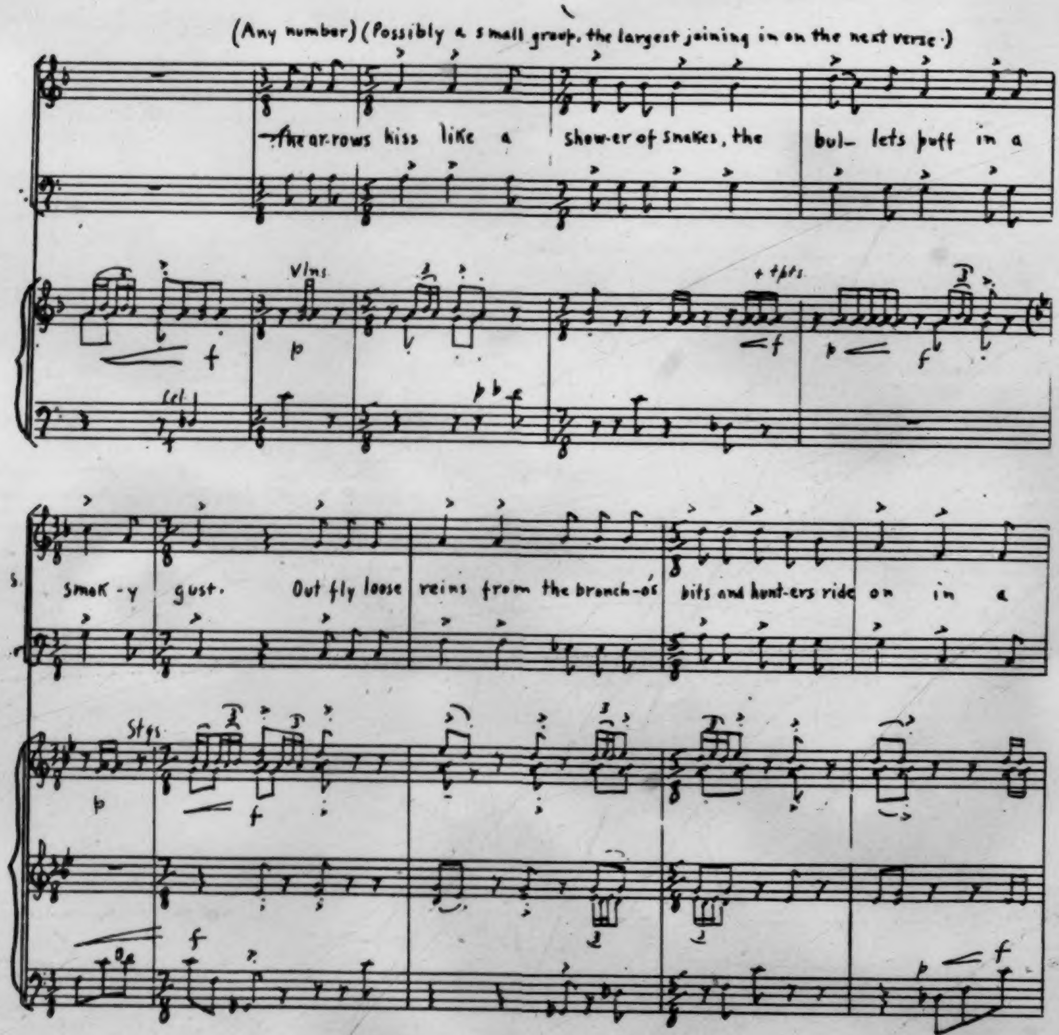
[20] *Ibid.*

The third verse scored for small male chorus begins with the words: "The arrows hiss like a shower of snakes." It is at this point in the score that the greatly expanded instrumental accompaniment takes on an eerie atonal quality and the justaposition becomes apparent with the key signature of two flats in the strings:

EXAMPLE 3.7 *The Buffalo Hunt*, Act II, scene vi


(Any number) (Possibly a small group, the largest joining in on the next verse.)
The ar-rows hiss like a show-er of snakes, the bul- lets puff in a
smok-y gust. Out fly loose reins from the bronch-os' bits and hunt-ers ride on in a
Vlns
+ tpts
Cel.
Stgs
p
f

The instrumental accompaniment is gradually enlarged to include three horns, three trumpets, two trombones and bass trombone, cymbals, and four-part strings. At the third interlude the strings are expanded by the instruction for the violins to play *divisi a 3*.

The largest forces are employed in the fourth verse: "The bellowing bulls rush blind with fear through river and marsh." The instrumentation at this point also includes full orchestra, with the addition of the flute and clarinet. The text of the fourth verse relates the height of the action during the buffalo hunt and therefore Somers' large instrumental setting appropriately underlines the action by creating the greatest amount of sound from the full complement of male chorus and greatly enlarged instrumental group.

The action gradually subsides with verse five and the women's chorus on the text: "When over sky-line hulks the last great form" and then "the fumbling thunder of their hoof's beat, beat, dies like an echo in distant hills ..." The strings are in five parts with double bass and violins *divisi* and only one oboe, one trumpet and one horn. The fifth interlude also provides a release of tension with the introduction of the harp, and the trumpets are instructed to play *con sordino*.

The final verse returns to the solo male voice in the form of a narration by Pierre Falcon. The scoring is much thinner with oboe, clarinet and harp and strings *con sordino*. This relaxed scoring suddenly undergoes a change after the words: "which I, Pierre the rhymester," and the full SATB chorus joins in on the ending: "have proudly told."

Somers' intricate rhythms and orchestral setting, along with subtle changes in the melody and accenting of particular words in the text, all contribute to a more vital as well as more primitive version of *The Buffalo Hunt*. As has been said of Somers' compositions before:

> No matter which form it takes, or which medium it employs, a work by Somers is always polished, well-balanced, sonorous ... and most of all, it never fails to come to life.[22]

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[22] Smith, *An Analysis of Selected Works*, p. 114.

CHAPTER IV

POPULAR SONGS OF THE PERIOD

The French and English popular songs of the period constitute the second category of folk music in the opera. The sources available to Somers were considerably more varied in this category than that of the previous one as there are numerous collections and transcriptions from all parts of the country. A representative group might include the works of Ernest Gagnon, Marius Barbeau, and the many collections of Edith Fowke.[1]

In dealing specifically with the Métis struggle, Somers also had a number of collections from which to choose, primarily those of Barbara Cass-Beggs,[2] and *The Songs of Old Manitoba* by Margaret Arnett MacLeod. The song, *We'll Hang Him up the River*, from John Coulter's play, *Riel*, was a natural choice since it was known to librettist Mavor Moore and because it was so well suited to the dramatic purposes of the plot.

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[1] Ernest Gagnon, *Chansons populaires du Canada* (Quebec Bureau du Foyer Canadien, 1865, Reprint Montréal: Beauchemin, 1947); Marius Barbeau, *Romancéro du Canada* (Montréal: Beauchemin, et Toronto: Macmillan, 1937); Edith Fowke and Alan Mills, *Canada's Story in Song*, Revised edition (Toronto: W.J. Gage Ltd., 1965); and with Richard Johnston, *More Folk Songs of Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Waterloo Music Co. [1967]).

[2] Barbara Cass-Beggs, *Eight Songs of Saskatchewan* (Toronto: Canadian Music Sales Corp. Ltd., 1963), and *Seven Métis Songs of Saskatchewan* (Don Mills, Ont.: BMI Canada Ltd., 1967).

The French Folk Music

The song *Le Roi Malheureux* was another natural choice not only because it deals specifically with the opening event of the opera, but also relates the Métis' point of view. The first scene of the opera portrays McDougall's attempt to enter the territory and his being informed not to do so without permission from the Provisional Government under the Leadership of Louis Riel. Pierre Falcon's verses relating this event were set to the air *The Wandering Jew* and proudly sung by the Métis throughout the territory during those times.

In the opera, Somers uses the song for the Métis male chorus in Act I, scene ii, and Act II, scene ii. The first time it is heard, the song is being sung offstage by the approaching Métis chorus who have captured Thomas Scott and are bringing him to Riel at Fort Garry. The words comment on what has occurred in the first scene. Therefore this use of the chorus can be likened to that of the original Greek chorus which served as a commentary on the action in the play. When Scott has been set free by Riel, the chorus, with a show of bravado, picks up the strains of the tune and departs. The song recurs in Act II, scene ii, after Scott's trial where it is in a greatly fragmented and distorted version.

The text used by Somers consists of the first two verses of Falcon's song with the opening words "Est-il rien sur la terre."[3] The verses and translation are as follows:[4]

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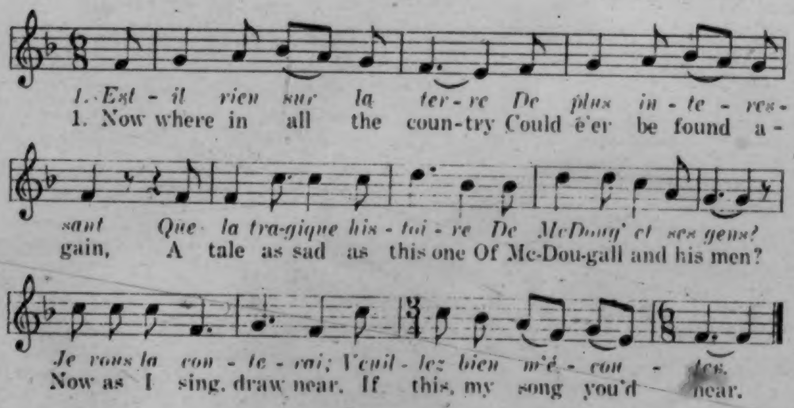
[3] Cherney incorrectly lists *Le Roi Malheureux* and "Est-il rien sur la terre" as two separate folk songs, rather than the title and first line of text. See Cherney, *Harry Somers*, p. 135.

Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux	*Misfortunes of an Unlucky "King"*
1. Est-il rien sur la terre	1. Now where in all the country
De plus intéressant	Could e'er be found again,
Que la tragique histoire	A tale as sad as this one
De McDoug' et ses gens?	Of McDougall and his men?
Je vous la conterai;	Now as I sing, draw near,
Veuillez bien m'écouter.	If this, my song, you'd hear.
2. Sur notre territoire,	2. He journeyed to our region -
Devenu ses Etats,	He thought it his estate;
Il venait ce bon père	The good man there would govern
Régner en potentat,	Like an eastern potentate,
Ainsi l'avait réglé	This land for him was free,
Le Ministre Cartier.	By Cartier's decree.

Somers' performance instructions indicate that the chorus should be: "Bright -- approaching from a distance," and the "First time perform to [the] syllable 'la.'"[5] He retains the key of F Major of the original song for the melody but sets the lower voice with two flats.

EXAMPLE 4.1 *Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux*


1. Est - il rien sur la ter - re De plus in - te - res -
1. Now where in all the coun-try Could e'er be found a -
sant Que la tra-gique his - toi - re De McDoug' et ses gens?
gain, A tale as sad as this one Of Mc-Dou-gall and his men?
Je vous la con - te - rai; Veuil - lez bien m'é - cou - ter.
Now as I sing, draw near. If this, my song you'd near.

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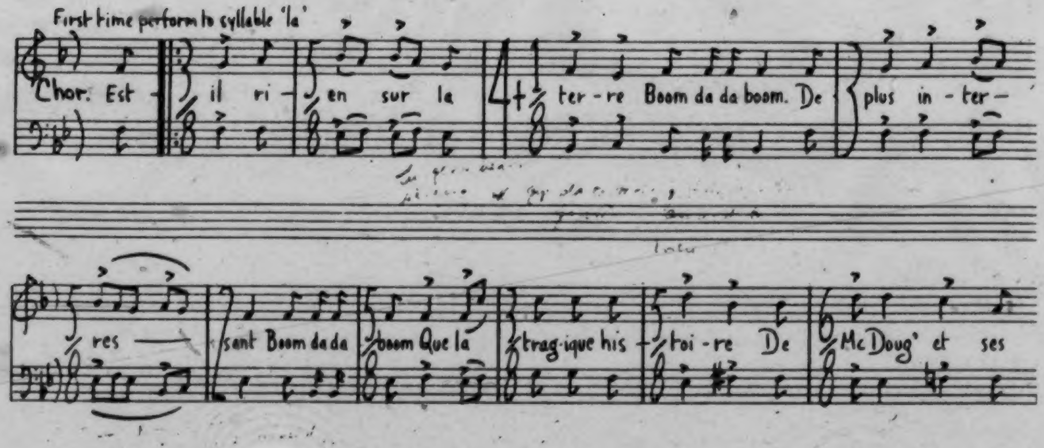
[4] MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, pp. 36-39.

[5] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Act I, scene ii.

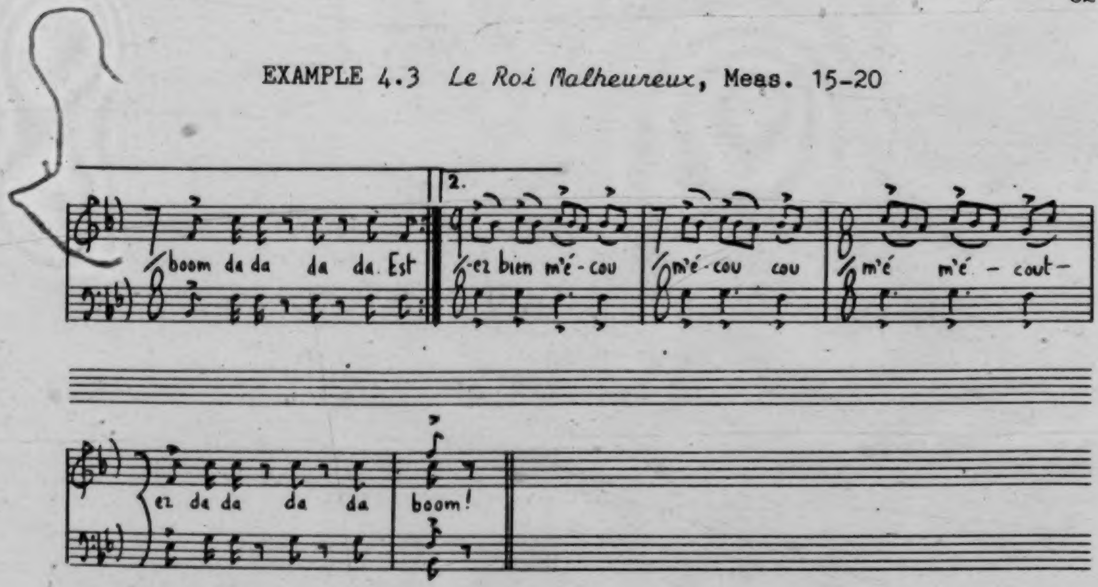
EXAMPLE 4.2 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Act I, scene ii


First time perform to syllable 'la'
Chor.
Est - il ri - en sur la ter - re Boom da da boom. De plus in - ter -
res — sant Boom da da boom Que la trag-ique his - toi - re De McDoug' et ses

The contrast of the metric setting with the original time of 6/8 is immediately apparent. A great variety of time signatures is used and these continue to change with each measure: 3/8, 5/8, 4 + 1/8, 3, 2 ... This varying metric pattern is only heard again with the repetition of the verse. The metric pattern also gives rise to a pronounced use of accents and adds to the liveliness of the song. The close of each phrase is emphasized rhythmically with a pattern of two sixteenth notes and a quarter note to the syllables "Da da boom." The effect is an added touch of bravado for the male chorus.

The melodic changes employed by Somers are primarily those of ornamenting and extending the melody rather than actual changes of pitch. This can be seen initially with the opening phrase in measure two where there is a repetition of the same notes on the words "rien sur." The number of notes is increased in the second phrase, measures four to six, on "intérresant," and the technique of extension through repetition after the double bar at the second ending is greatly emphasized through repetition of both the words and pitches.

EXAMPLE 4.3 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Meas. 15-20



The first and second verses are heard at the close of the second scene when Scott has been set free and the Métis prepare to leave. A mouth organ introduces the voices which begin hesitantly to the syllables "la, la, la" and then gain momentum with a "Boom da da da da," ushering in the chorus on "Est-il rien sur la terre," which closes the scene.

The English Folk Music

The texts of the two English folk songs both depict the opposing side to Riel and his government. *The Marching Song*, with text by Alexander Hunter Murray "Riel Sits in His Chamber o' State," was written for the proposed march on Fort Garry, February 15 1870. Although the attack never materialized, the verses of the song were later expanded by Murray and the troops marching West under Wolseley's command knew the words. The second English folk song, *We'll Hang Him up the River*, is depicted in the opera as the marching song of Wolseley's approaching troops.

The music for *Orangemen Unite*, Act II, scene iv, and the Victorian Tune which follows also represent and characterize the English side. These are not based on actual folk songs but are Somers' compositions in the style of folk music and will therefore be looked at in the final chapter.[6]

Somers chose to use Murray's *Marching Song* as a *leitmotiv* for the opera. This may have been due to the prophetic text of the song which was set to the Scottish air *Johnny Cope*. Somers himself describes the way in which he makes use of the song:

> From the very top of the opera it starts with drum sounds ... followed by a voice singing of Riel: "Riel sits in his chamber o' state ..," a song sung at the time by soldiers who were heading out West. This is a basic motif which I translate, I vary ... which actually forms a core moving out throughout the whole work and which terminates the work ...[7]

The melody is based on the intervals of a minor third, and a major second, and this motive permeates the musical score. According to Smith "There is evidence of a row from which thematic material is drawn. This row contains pentatonic cells, and is ... related to the folk material ... The opening tenor solo is derived from this, as is the closing flute solo."[8] The motive is used both vocally and instrumentally. It is first heard in the Tenor solo of the

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[6] In his article on Somers, Cherney's use of *Orangemen Unite* as the example of popular song of the Riel period, is misleading. See Brian Cherney, "Harry (Stuart) Somers," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Sixth edition (London: Macmillan; Washington, D.C.: Groves Dictionaries of Music, 1980), Vol. 17, p. 474.

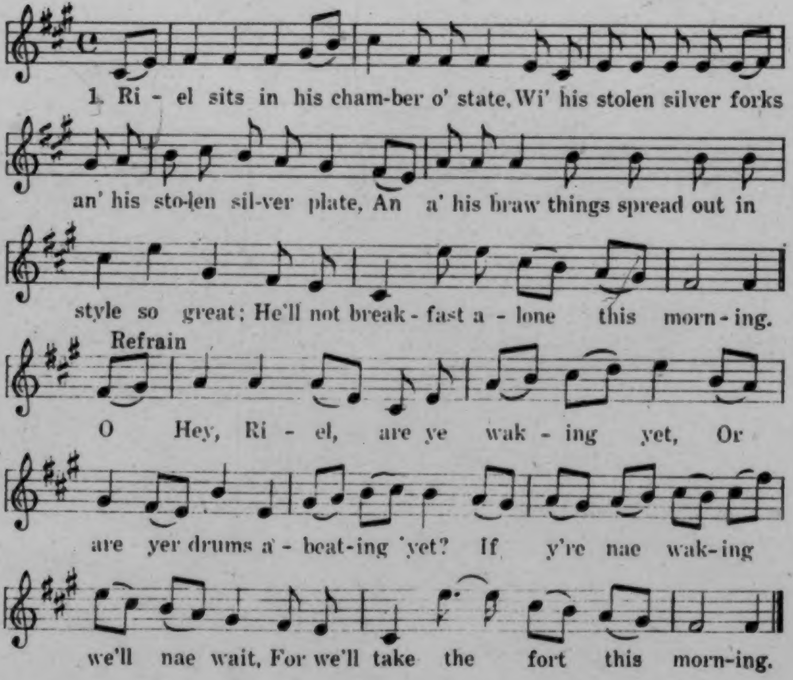
[7] Harry Somers, *Louis Riel* (Canadian Opera Company) Sound Tapes in possession of Canadian Music Centre, Calgary, Alberta.

[8] Smith, *An Analysis of Selected Works*, p. 87.

Introduction, later as the flute solo introducing Riel's aria in which he envisions himself as the prophet David, Act I, scene iv, in Julie's aria set in Riel's jail cell, Act III, scene v, and again at the very end of the opera as the recurring flute solo.

A comparison with the original source once again reveals the use of both ornamentation and a very free interpretation of rhythm. Somers' tempo indication states "Slow -- not rigid."[9] There are no time signatures or measure indications other than oblique lines and *fermatas* to indicate varied lengths of pause. Each phrase ends with a strongly enunciated consonant and is followed by a lengthy timed *fermata*.

EXAMPLE 4.4 *The Marching Song*


1. Ri - el sits in his cham-ber o' state, Wi' his stolen silver forks
an' his sto-len sil-ver plate, An a' his braw things spread out in
style so great; He'll not break - fast a - lone this morn - ing.
Refrain
O Hey, Ri - el, are ye wak - ing yet, Or
are yer drums a - beat-ing yet? If y're nae wak-ing
we'll nae wait, For we'll take the fort this morn-ing.

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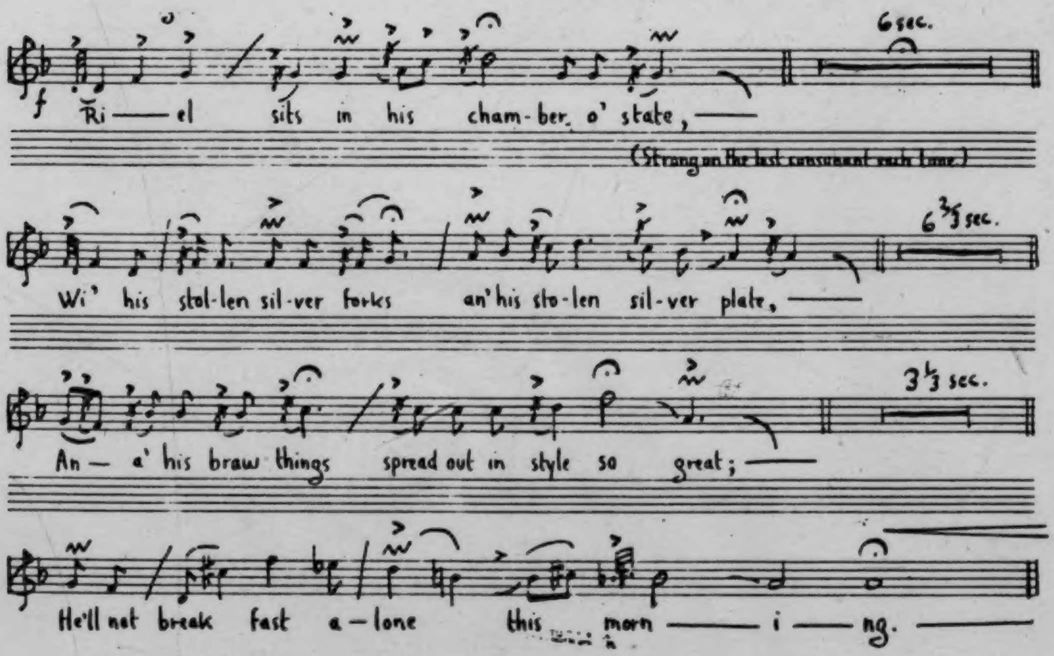
[9] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Introduction.

EXAMPLE 4.5 *Riel Sits in His Chamber o' State*, Introduction[10]


6 sec.
Ri — el sits in his cham-ber o' state, —
(Strong on the last consonant each time)
6⅔ sec.
Wi' his stol-len sil-ver forks an' his sto-len sil-ver plate, —
3⅓ sec.
An — a' his braw things spread out in style so great; —
He'll not break fast a — lone this morn — i — ng. —

The melody is transposed from the original f sharp minor to g minor, thereby raising it a semitone, although Somers states that it is "possible to try [an even] higher transposition."[11] The final line of the song "He'll not breakfast alone this morning," takes on a tragic quality with the inclusion of the "C sharp" and "B natural." The ornamented ending fluctuates between "B natural," "C sharp" and "B flat" and the falling semitone ends the song unexpectedly on "A".

The second verse of Murray's song, which formed the refrain of the original, is set for SATB chorus by Somers and is heard in the

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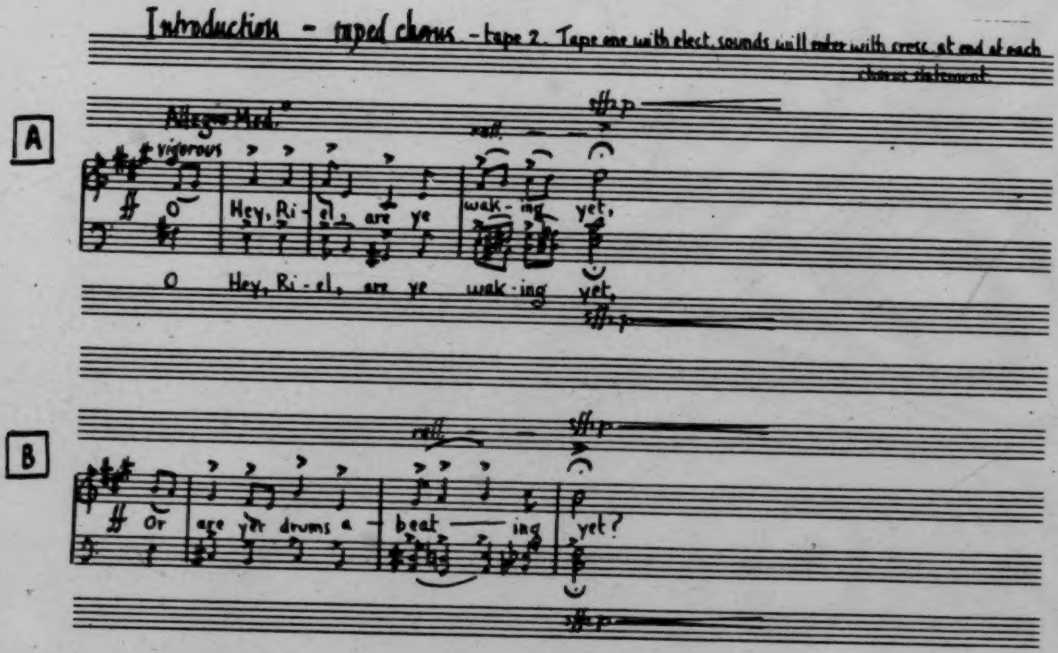
[10] The song in the opera is always referred to by the first line of its text rather than the original title.

[11] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Introduction.

Introduction and Battle Scene music along with electronic sound and a full orchestra, all of which Somers pre-recorded. In this chorus Somers uses the melody almost note for note in the same key as the original. For the lower parts, however, he omits a key signature and writes in the accidentals. This atonal setting along with the electronic sound and full orchestra creates an other-worldly, strange atmosphere which "is all preparatory of the drama ... the tension of the battle which is to follow ..."[12]

EXAMPLE 4.6 *O Hey, Riel,* Introduction


Introduction - taped chorus - tape 2. Tape one with elect. sounds will enter with cresc. at end of each chorus statement
A
Allegro Mod.
vigorous
rall.
sffp
O Hey, Ri-el, are ye wak-ing yet,
B
Or are yer drums a-beat-ing yet?

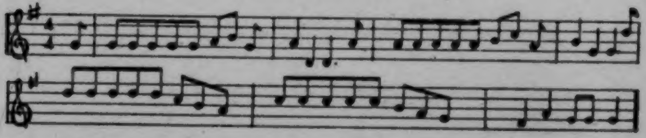
---

[12] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Sound Tapes.

The song *We'll Hang Him up the River* first appears in the crowd-haranguing scene, Act II, scene iv, following *Orangemen Unite* and the "saccharine" cornet solo of the Victorian tune. This "banal" waltz theme is juxtaposed with *We'll Hang Him up the River* in 4/4 time. According to Somers, the solo voice begins "Completely in own tempo."[13] At this point the band is playing in D Major while the chorus is set in B Flat. On the surface the scene appears comical, depicting the aspiring politicians, the easily-led crowd and the slightly-out-of-tune band consisting of clarinet, cornet and tuba. But the juxtaposition and superimposition of the contrasting styles of music also symbolizes the sinister implications underlying the scene.

More voices are added with each repeated phrase of "We'll Hang Him up the River..." The band gradually peters out at the words "And he'll roast in hell forever ..." At this point the full chorus repeats the verse to the accompaniment of the band instruments and the added bass drum.

EXAMPLE 4.7 *We'll Hang Him up the River*



We'll hang him up the river/with your yah, yah, yah!
We'll hang him up the river/with your yah, yah, yah!
We'll hang him up the river
And he'll roast in hell for ever/with your yah, yah, yah,
Yah! Yah! Yah!

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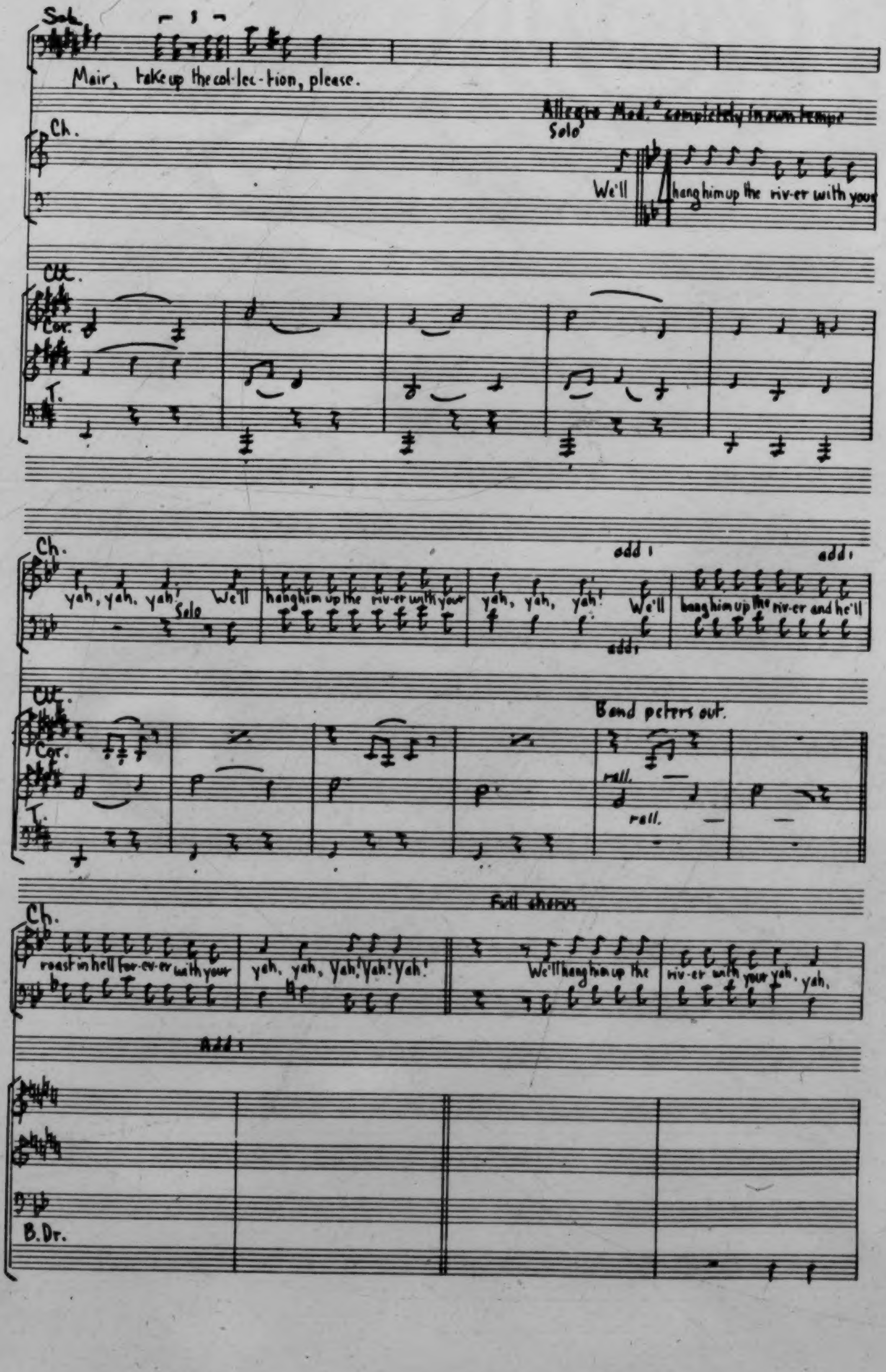
[13] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Act II, scene iv.

EXAMPLE 4.8 *We'll Hang Him up the River*, Act II, scene iv


Sol.
Mair, take up the col-lec-tion, please.
Allegro Mod.° completely in own tempo
Solo
Ch.
We'll
hang him up the riv-er with your
Ctt.
Cor.
T.
yah, yah, yah!
Solo
We'll
hang him up the riv-er with your
yah, yah, yah!
We'll
add 1
hang him up the riv-er and he'll
add 1
add 1
Band peters out.
rall.
rall.
Full chorus
roast in hell for-ev-er with your
yah, yah, Yah! Yah! Yah!
We'll hang him up the
riv-er with your yah, yah,
Add 1
B.Dr.

There are a few changes from the original source but they are not very pronounced. Somers transposed the melody from G Major to B Flat but retained the rhythmic pattern of the original. There are some melodic differences in the pitch of the upbeat, which varies between intervals of a fourth and a fifth, thereby beginning with the same pitch with which the preceding phrase ended. It may have been Somers' intention to point up the irony of the situation through the use of a deceptively-simple song setting to incite the crowd to its threat of violence.

Later in the opera when Wolseley's troops march on Fort Garry, Act II, scene vi, and after Riel's trial scene, Act III, scene vi, the song takes on a more vicious character, depicting the crowd's thirst for blood. The motivic and dramatic uses of the folk music will be looked at in greater detail in the final chapter.

CHAPTER V

FOLK MUSIC AND THE DRAMA

Somers has described *Louis Riel* as a music drama, or musical theatre in which "the music should not impede the drama ... the music is like a stream to keep the dramatic flow going," and later, "the music is a platform on which the voices move ..."[1] It is therefore important to look at the way the folk music is used in terms of the plot and the drama. Somers has also stated that the folk music is

> "indigenous to the whole work so that certain themes and tunes keep recurring, taking on different shapes according to the way events progress ... a simple tune at the outset has another color and kind of significance later."[2]

The recurring themes and tunes are varied according to the dramatic events of the plot, but remain recognizable reminders of previous scenes, characters, and ethnic groups. Another way in which these associations are portrayed is through particular instrumental colours such as the flute, the drums or of an unusual instrumental combination like the flute, sleigh bells, and tom-toms. These melodic and instrumental associations are therefore used motivically through melodic transformations, recurring tunes set in a different character, or through the distinctive colour of a particular instrument. These motivic and dramatic uses of the folk music will be looked at in relation to their dramatic purpose and overall effect in the work.

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[1] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Sound Tape.

[2] Somers, *Louis Riel*: The Score, p. 46.

Another dramatic use of folk material evident in the opera, apart from that based on original sources, is through Somers own composition in the folk music idiom. It may be termed "quasi-folk music" or "Somers in the style of folk music." These pieces are the Indian Dance No. 1 in Act II, scene vi; the song *Orangemen Unite* in Act II, scene iv, and the Victorian tune played on the cornet which follows the Orangemen song of the same scene. In each case, Somers assimilated the style of the music of the period and of the ethnic group with which it is associated in order to create music which lends the full flavour of folk character to the opera.

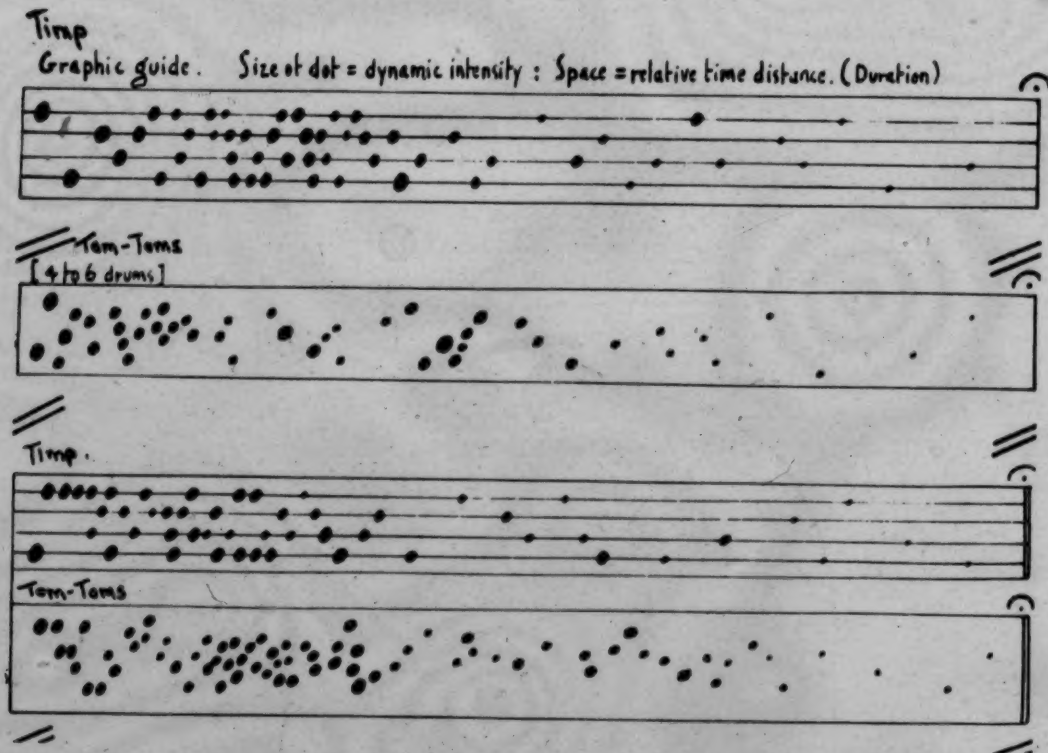
Uses of Native-Indian Folk Music

The motivic and dramatic uses of the indigenous music of the Native people is perhaps the most prominent. Somers portrays the Native-Indian element in a variety of ways, both instrumentally and vocally, through juxtaposition and superimposition of different styles of music throughout the score.

The instrumental colours of certain instruments are always associated with the Native-Indian. The flute, sleigh bells and drums are most frequently used and heighten the dramatic impact with their distinctive timbres. In particular, the tom-toms must be noted for their prominence and dramatic effect.

The opening Introduction consists of an improvised section for the Timpani and four to six tom-toms. Somers has notated this section with a graphic guide in which the size of the dot equals the dynamic intensity and the space equals the relative time distance or duration. The immediate effect of this dramatic opening to the opera is that it is a very dark, fateful sound and carries the ominous threat of impending tragedy. It is also indicative of conflict and battle and may be considered to be a battle motif as well. All of these associations heighten dramatic impact and the drums are used motivically each time they are played. The music of the Introduction is in fact heard later in the opera as the Battle Scene music between scenes iii and iv of Act III where the percussion sounds represent gunfire. The entire Introduction consists of tenor solo, SATB chorus, orchestra and electronic forces, and is a preparation for the drama and the tension of the battle which is about to enfold.

EXAMPLE 5.1 Introduction

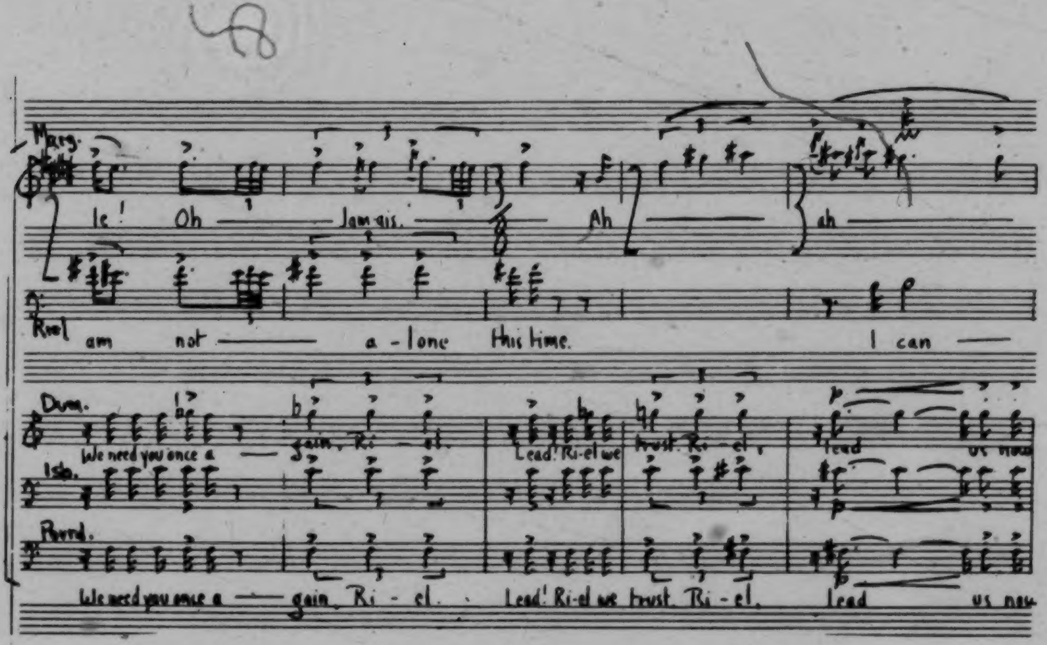

Graphic guide. Size of dot = dynamic intensity : Space = relative time distance. (Duration)

Percussion is also frequently used as interlude or bridge music between scenes. For example, in Act I, between scene II and III, drum sounds are used to underline the contrast between the wild Western frontier and the scene immediately following set in the urbane and witty Eastern capital of Ottawa.

The aria *Kuyas* is most strongly associated with the particular instrumental colours of flute, sleigh bells, tom-tom and bass drum. The entire scene is one of lament, from the initial opening of Marguerite's lullaby on the syllables "hano, hano," and throughout the remainder of the scene, which portrays Riel's struggle with his sense of mission as opposed to his desire to remain with his family. This struggle is aptly portrayed by the sparse instrumental accompaniment of flute, sleigh bells and tom-tom which continues while Riel and his Métis friends discuss his taking up the leadership again. There is juxtaposition and superimposition of vocal styles as well. Marguerite continues with the highly ornamented vocal line of *Kuyas* over the male chorus set in a very rhythmic homophonic style. Riel's part also takes on the ornamentation of Marguerite's aria. (see Example 5.2)

The climax of the dramatic action in the scene takes place with Dumont singing the words "You have a mission Louis Riel ..." At this point the percussion and especially the tom-tom interlude portend Riel's fateful reply.

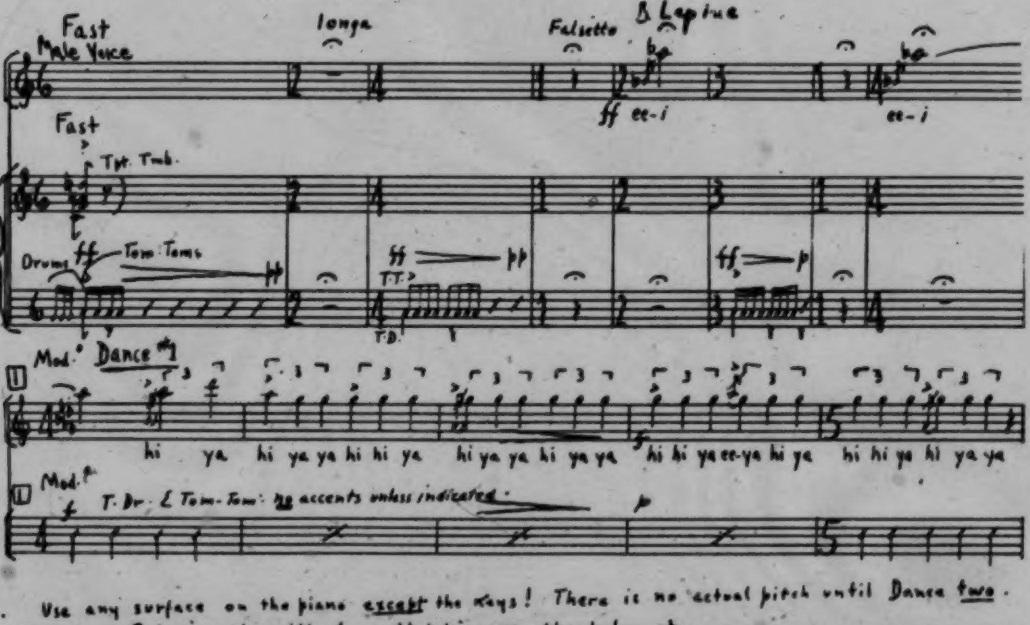
EXAMPLE 5.2 Act III, scene i


48
Marg.
Ic! Oh Jamais. Ah ah
Riel
am not a - lone this time. I can
Dum.
We need you once a - gain, Ri - el. Lead! Ri-el we trust. Ri - el, lead us now
Isbo.
Peard.
We need you once a - gain, Ri - el. Lead! Ri-el we trust. Ri - el, lead us now

The instruments again take on a motivic role in the following scene. The setting is in Frog Lake, Saskatchewan where Father André is conducting Mass in Latin (the fourth language to be used in the opera). This is the scene of Riel's return to Canada after his many years of exile; the first of his group to enter the church are the Indians. Their arrival is portrayed musically by the use of sleigh bells and then tom-toms and tenor drum. The use of these instruments lends an ominous quality to the scene as the congregation becomes agitated on their arrival. There is a juxtaposition of styles of music as the Latin church hymn is contrasted with the sound of sleigh bells and drums as a dramatic foil.

The Indian Dance No. 1, Act II, scene vi, is an example of a Somers' composition in the style of folk music. The accompanying instruments consist of percussion, tom-toms in a rapid sixteenth-note introduction and changing metres, along with tenor drum. The male voice enters *Falsetto* with yells on "ee-i, ee-i." The drums are instructed to play without any accents unless indicated, as the drum beats are in quarter notes against triplet quarter notes in the voice part. The drum beats therefore do not coincide with the voice part except at longer intervals. This is a stylistic characteristic of Native-Indian music.

EXAMPLE 5.3 Indian Dance No. 1, Act II, scene vi


Fast
Male Voice
longa
Falsetto
Fast
Tpt. Tmb.
Drums
ff
Tom-Toms
pp
ff
pp
T.T.
T.D.
ff
p
ee-i
ee-i
Mod.
Dance #1
hi ya hi ya ya hi hi ya hi ya ya hi ya ya hi hi ya ee-ya hi ya hi hi ya hi ya ya
Mod.
f
T. Dr. & Tom-Tom: no accents unless indicated.
p

Use any surface on the piano except the keys! There is no actual pitch until Dance two.
Experiment with four flat fingers, the palm etc

The text consists entirely of untranslatable syllables of "hi ya, hi ya ya," interspersed with yells and hoots of "ee-i" and "yi yi." The instructions are that the "solo voice will always start each musical sentence, (from the high A Flats); others may join in as it progresses. Voices are to perform with an excessive *vibrato* and breath accent on virtually every note."[3]

The range of the voice part is from the "A" to "D" an octave and one-half higher. The piece is based on the pentatonic scale which is frequently found in folk music. The opening of the song begins on high A Flats and there are falling pitches and *glissandos* throughout with a gradual descending of pitch towards the end of the piece, which is also an Indian characteristic. A third voice designated Soprano enters with long oscillations on the syllable "ah." A *Più Mosso* section with voices reaching fever pitch over highly accented and agitated drums brings the piece to a frantic close.

Uses of French and English Folk Music

The song *Le Roi Malheureux* is scored for the Métis male chorus in Act I, scene ii, where it is lively and bright, musically portraying the character of the Métis soldiers. Another quality is imparted to the song at a later time in the opera when Scott is to be executed and Riel states, "I cannot let one foolish man stand in the way of a nation!" The use of hard stick and tom-toms ushers in the chorus on "Est-il rien sur la terre," but it is a very tragic-sounding version accompanied by tom-toms, snare drum rolls, cello and high strings. The song is broken and distorted with pauses and accidentals, atonality lends an unusually harsh sound, all indicating tragic portents for the future.

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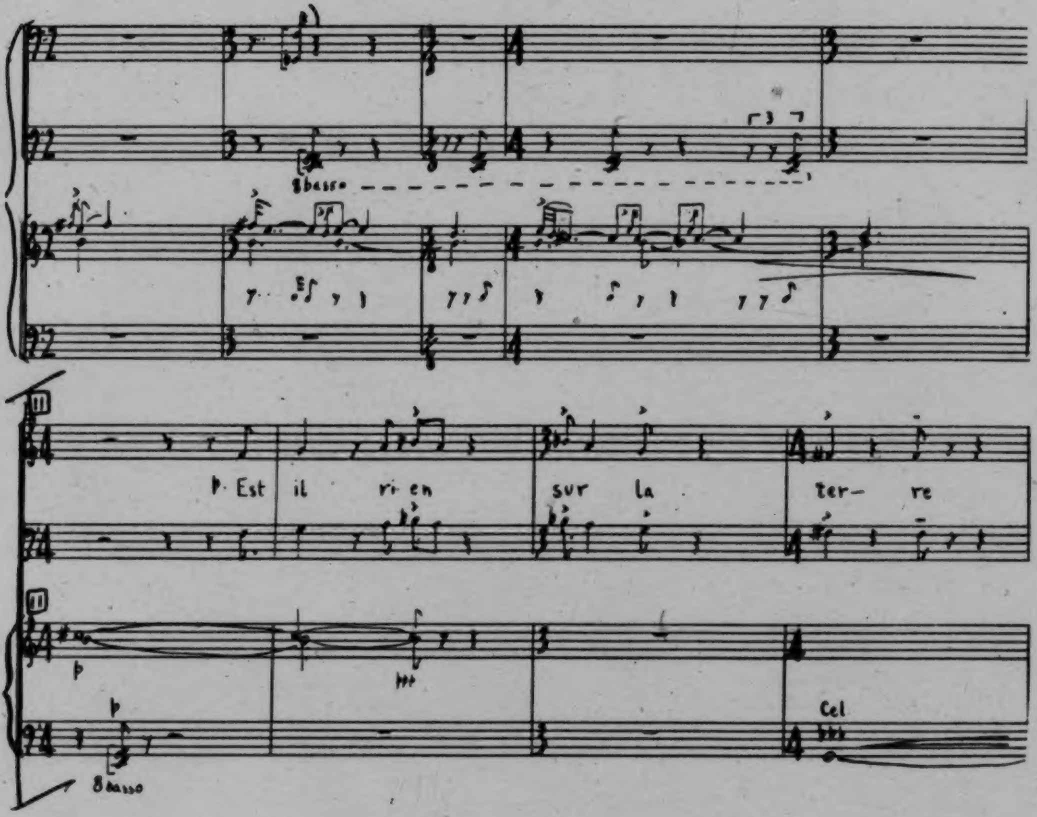
[3] Somers, *Louis Riel*, Act II, scene vi.

EXAMPLE 5.4 *Le Roi Malheureux*, Act II, scene ii

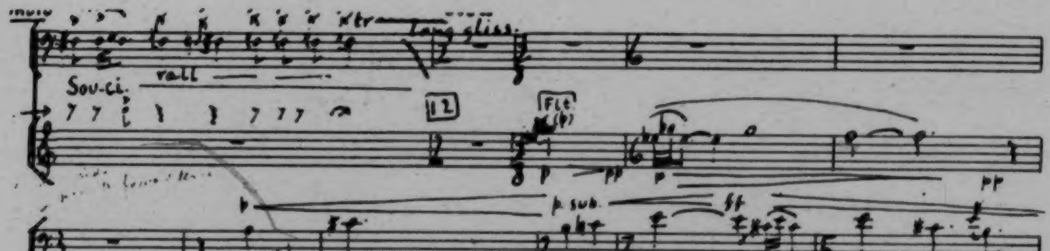


A very effective use of the song *Riel Sits in His Chamber o' State* was made in the television production following the scene of Scott's execution. This was not written into the score, however. The solo tenor voice sings the same music as at the opening of the opera but the lyrics are altered to fit the drama:

> Riel sits in his chamber o' state
> With the head of Thomas Scott
> On his stolen silver plate.
> He may think he's safe today
> But my friends you wait
> He'll not breakfast alone in the morning.

The interval of the minor third which opens the song is the basis of the many transformations the song undergoes in the score. A number of these transformations have already been discussed. Perhaps the most important dramatic use of this motiv is in the flute solo. The motive is later reiterated in the voice part as well. (see Example 5.5) The flute solo "reappears from time to time, generally at points of transition. The return at the very end of the opera ... is especially poignant."[4]

EXAMPLE 5.5 Flute Solo, Act I, scene ii


Sou-ci.
rall
12
Fl.
p sub.
ff
pp
Il s'en va
(tou
tou
Tp.
Hn. Tub.
ff
rall
13
slow
jours, lui,
Som - bre
et le cœur sai - si;
Il sou - fre un
pressing forward
gou - fre Est
dans un gouf - fre
son cœur qu'il sent se

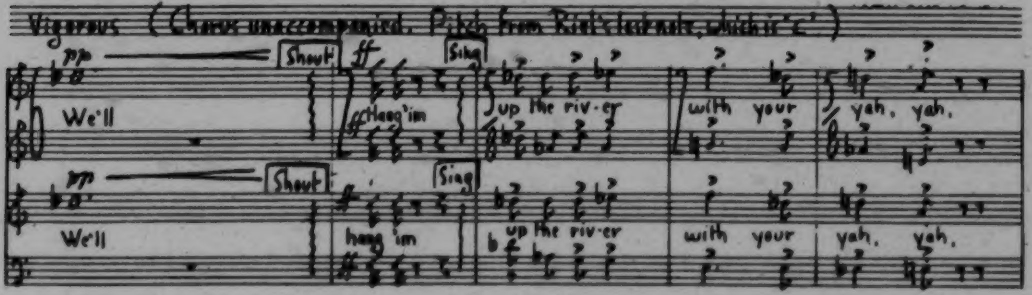
---

[4] Cherney, *Harry Somers*, p. 136.

The main motivic uses of *We'll Hang Him up the River* are heard in conjunction with the crowd scenes and portray the vengeful crowd seeking blood. The song is first introduced in the crowd-haranguing scene, Act II, scene iv where it is juxtaposed with the "banal" Victorian tune. In the second instance it is somewhat more tension-filled as the song of Wolseley's approaching troops; it is heard offstage and juxtaposed with the anxious tones of Riel and the Métis at Fort Garry. The dramatic effects of the song are made even more dramatic by use of the text especially on the words, "Hang him!" which again play an ostinato-like role during the Trial Scene as the crowd becomes progressively more hysterical during the trial proceedings.

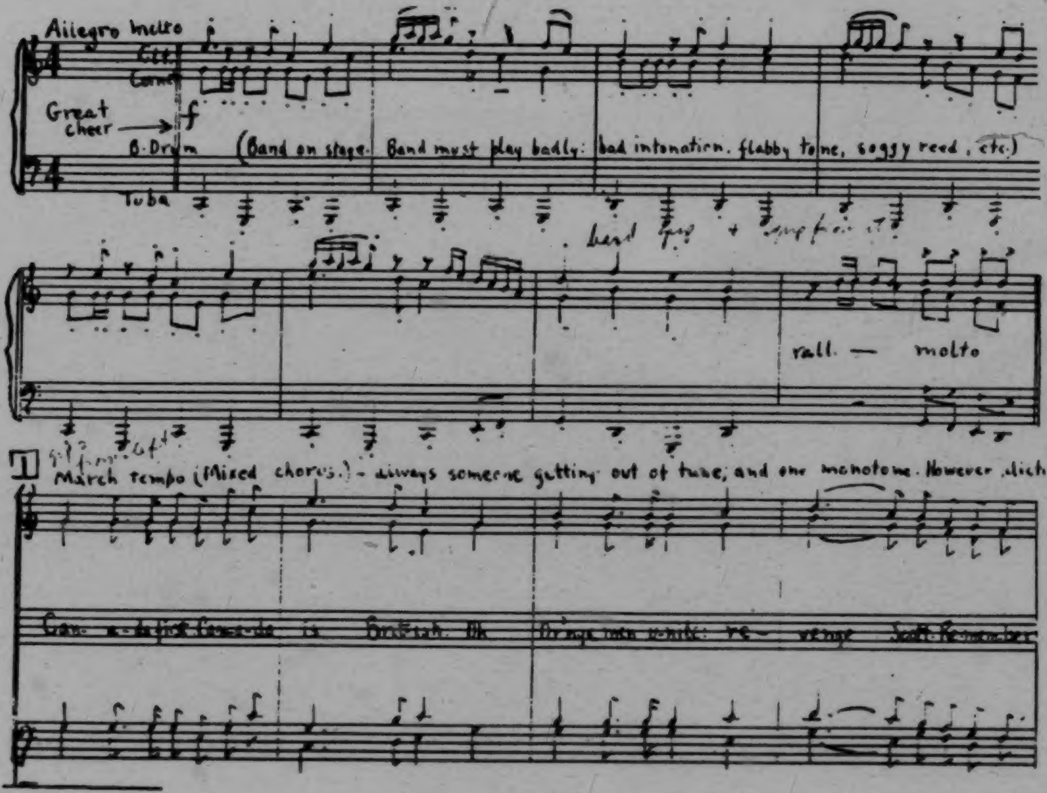
In its final version after Riel's trial, the song takes on a more sharp and chilling character. The text "We'll Hang 'im" is particularly set off with the dynamic contrast of *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* on "hang 'im" as well as in the duration of the dotted-whole note and two sixteenth notes on "hang 'im" which is followed by a pause and interspersed with shouts. The remainder of the line is set in a highly-accented, changing metre at every measure, with clashing atonal chords on "yah, yah, yah."

EXAMPLE 5.6 *We'll Hang Him up the River*, Act III, scene 6-7


Vigorous (Chorus unaccompanied. Pitch from Riel's last note, which is 'c')
pp
Shout
ff
Sing
We'll
Hang 'im
up the riv-er
with your
yah, yah.
pp
Shout
Sing
We'll
hang 'im
up the riv-er
with your
yah, yah.

The song *Orangemen Unite* and the Victorian tune, Act II, scene iv, are straight diatonic writing and further examples of Somers writing in the style of folk music. Somers felt that a style of music which the audience would recognize was required to give the scene the necessary underlying cynicism and wit in order to point up the sinister quality beneath the surface comical mood of the crowd. The music is a hymn-tune type or as Somers has stated "Central Ontario Gothic." The on-stage band, consisting of clarinet, cornet, tuba and drum, plays very badly. The cornet then begins to play the "saccharine" waltz of the Victorian tune.[5]

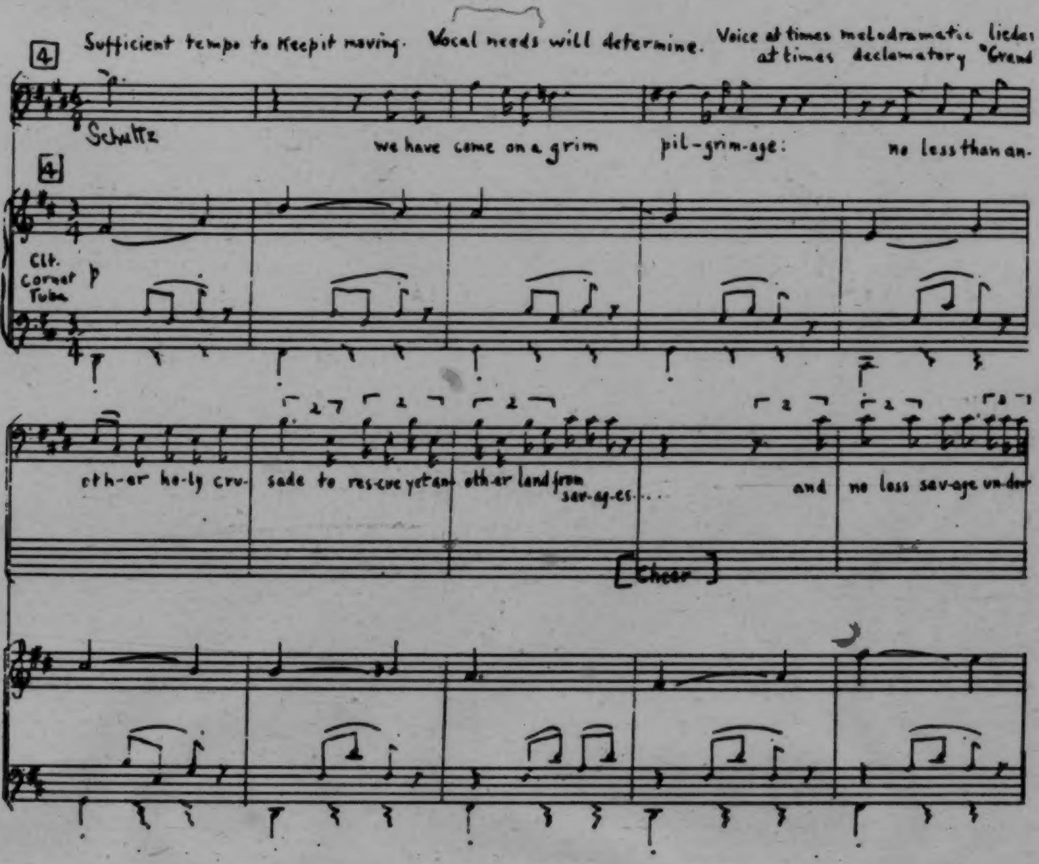
EXAMPLE 5.7 *Orangemen Unite*, Act II, scene iv


Allegro molto
Clt.
Cornet
Great cheer
f
B. Drum
(Band on stage. Band must play badly: bad intonation, flabby tone, soggy reed, etc.)
Tuba
rall. — molto
1
March tempo (Mixed chorus.) - always someone getting out of tune, and one monotone. However dich
Orangemen unite: re- venge

---

[5] Cherney, *Harry Somers*, p. 136-137.

EXAMPLE 5.8 Victorian Tune, Act II, scene iv


4
Sufficient tempo to keep it moving. Vocal needs will determine. Voice at times melodramatic lieder
at times declamatory "Grand
Schultz
we have come on a grim pil-grim-age: no less than an-
4
Clt.
Cornet
Tuba
p
oth-er ho-ly cru- sade to res-cue yet an- oth-er land from sav-ag-es.... and no less sav-age un-der
Cheer

Conclusion

In this thesis on the use of folk music in *Louis Riel*, the songs have been looked at in the various places they occur in the score of the opera. A comparison has been made with the original sources in terms of melody, rhythm and text. It is in the area of melody that Somers' makes the borrowings his own. The use of ornamentation of the melodic line is a frequent Somers' characteristic, along with extension through ornamentation and repetition of words or phrases of the text. Somers also has a preference for a very free rhythmic concept, either through metrically unstructured time with *fermatas* to indicate carefully timed pauses, or else the very rhythmic patterns of metric changes on each measure with a correspondingly heavy use of frequent accents, giving his versions a more lively sound than that of the original. Somers' juxtaposition and superimposition of different musical styles, with use of abstract and atonal harmonies as well as electronic music, lends a very abstract and tense quality to the folk songs.

The dramatic purposes of the plot have been pointed up through motivic and dramatic uses of the folk music by means of recurring melodic motives as well as distinctive instrumental colours. Somers has further added to the dramatic uses of folk music with his own compositions in the folk music style. Dramatic contrast has been effectively created through juxtaposition of folk music and cold, abstract atonal sounds. It is most fitting that folk music was used to portray the drama of Louis Riel as he is a folk hero:

> The legend will far outgrow the man, because Riel is more than a minor figure in Canadian history. He is an immensely colorful personification of some of the great liturgical themes of mankind. One is of the idealist driven mad by continued betrayal ... Another of the halfbreed, the schizophrenic outsider ... Another of the leader of a small nation ... All these themes are timeless, ... but they are also very much of our time. They are both Canadian and Universal ...[6]

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[6] Mavor Moore, "The Theme is Timeless," *Opera Canada*, Vol. 8-9, 1967-68, p. 44.

On the eve of the Centennial of the 1885 Rebellion, the subject of the opera is still very relevant. There are rumours of a posthumous pardon for Riel, discussions of French language rights and Métis land claims in the West. It is therefore fitting that the folk music in the opera should bring to life the era and "some of the excitement and depth of feeling that existed in the time of Louis Riel."[7] For all of the foregoing reasons, the opera *Louis Riel* will continue to be an "epoch-making event" in the history of Canadian opera.

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[7] Somers, "Louis Riel: The Score," p. 46.

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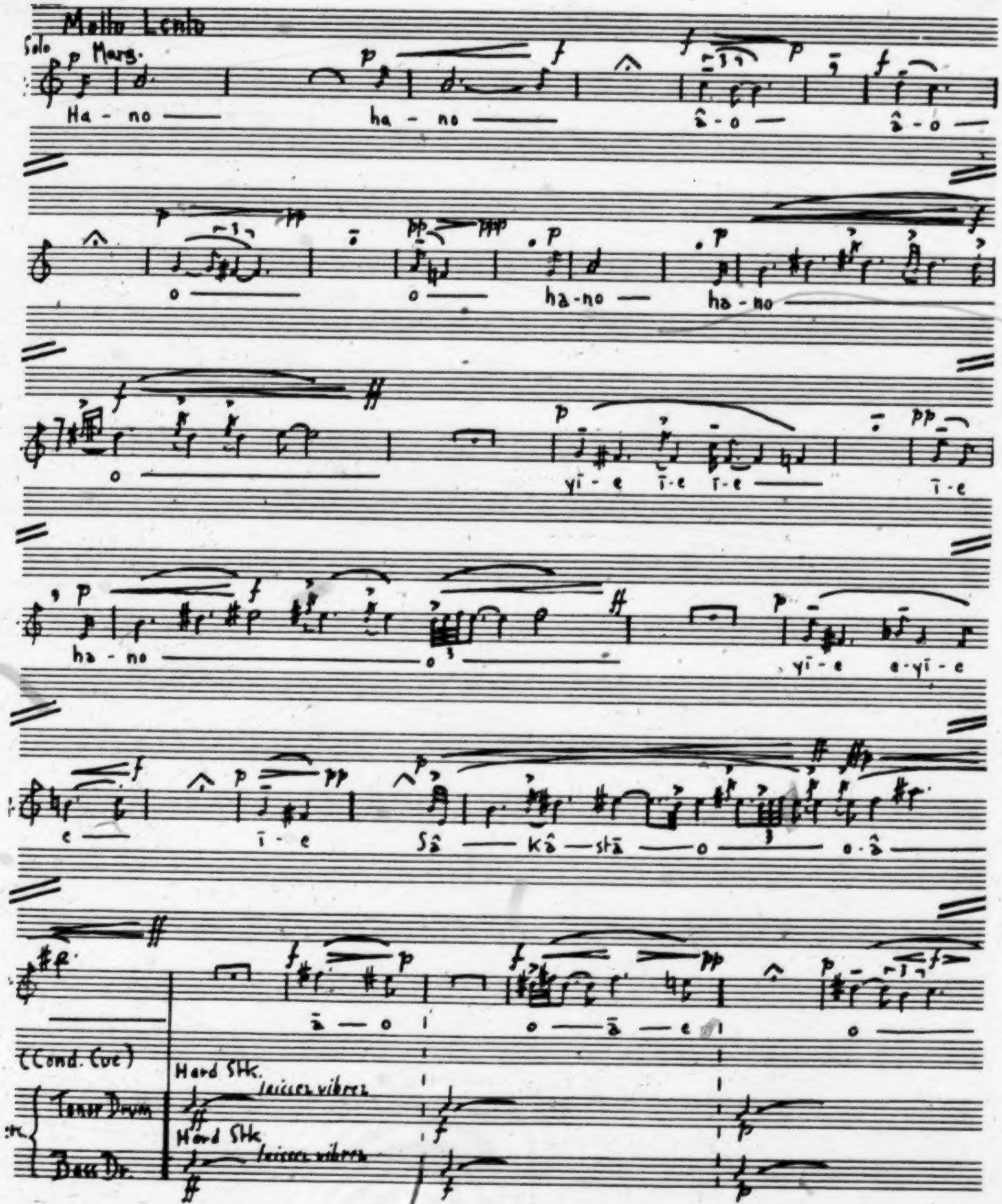
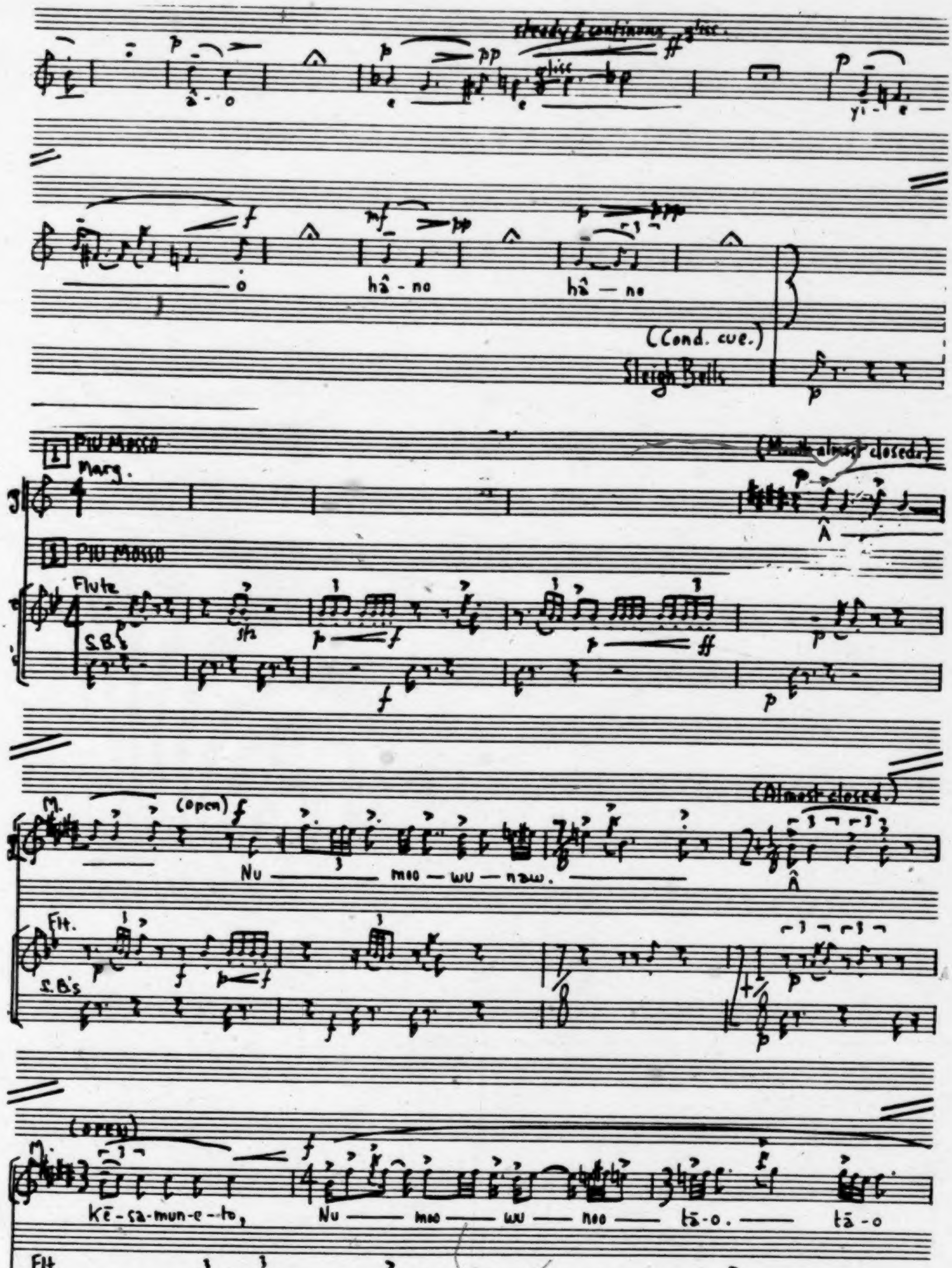
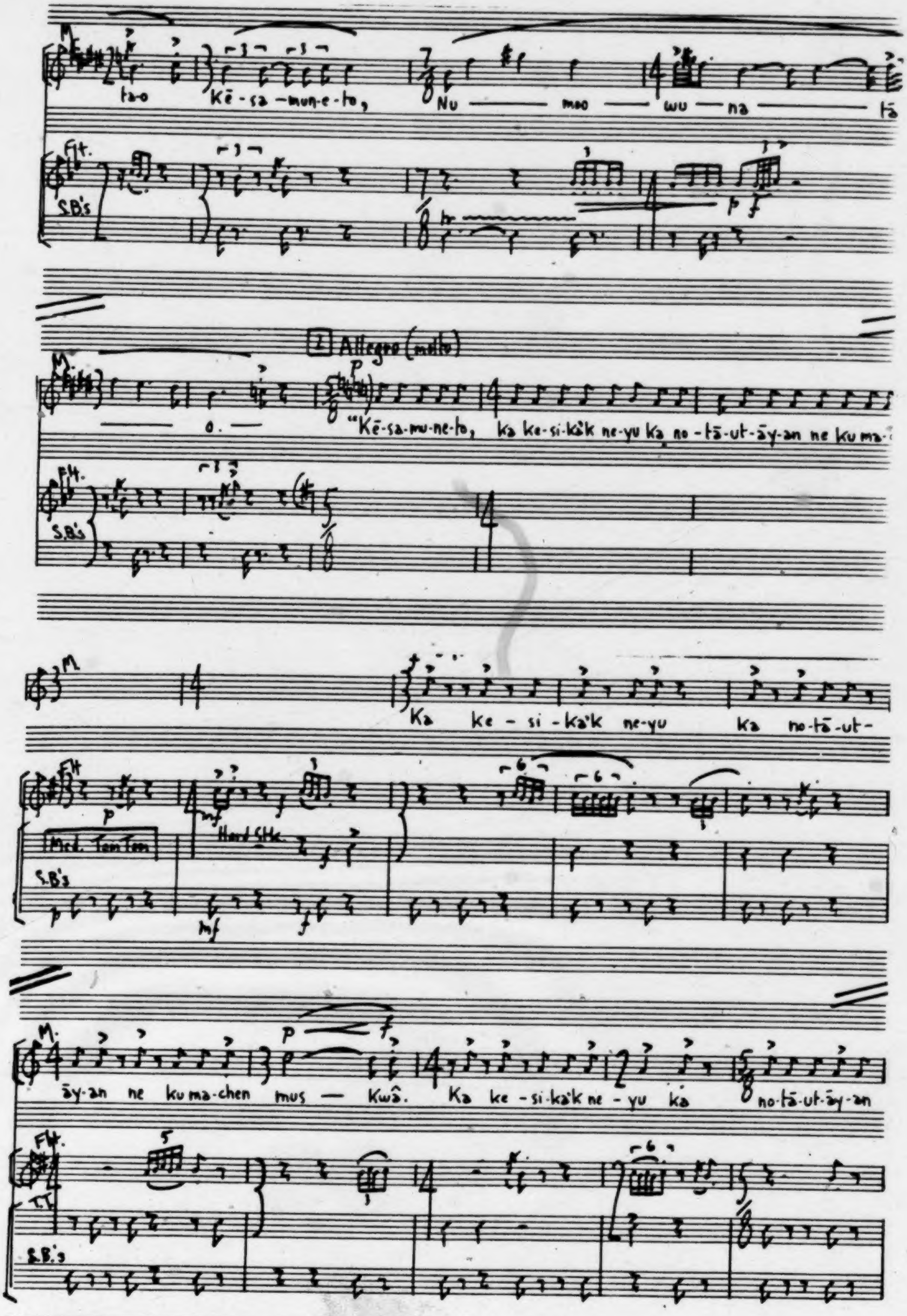
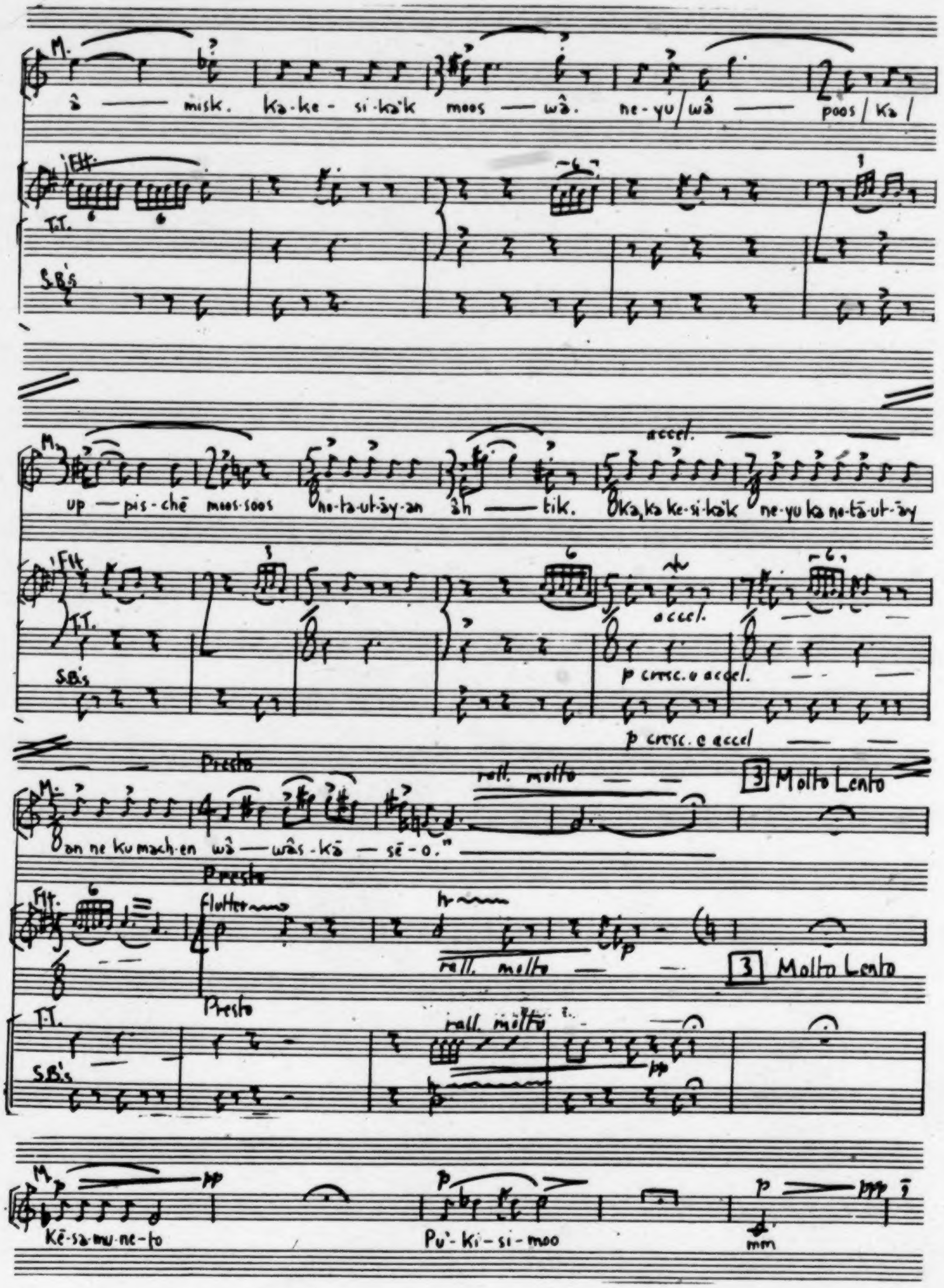
APPENDIX I

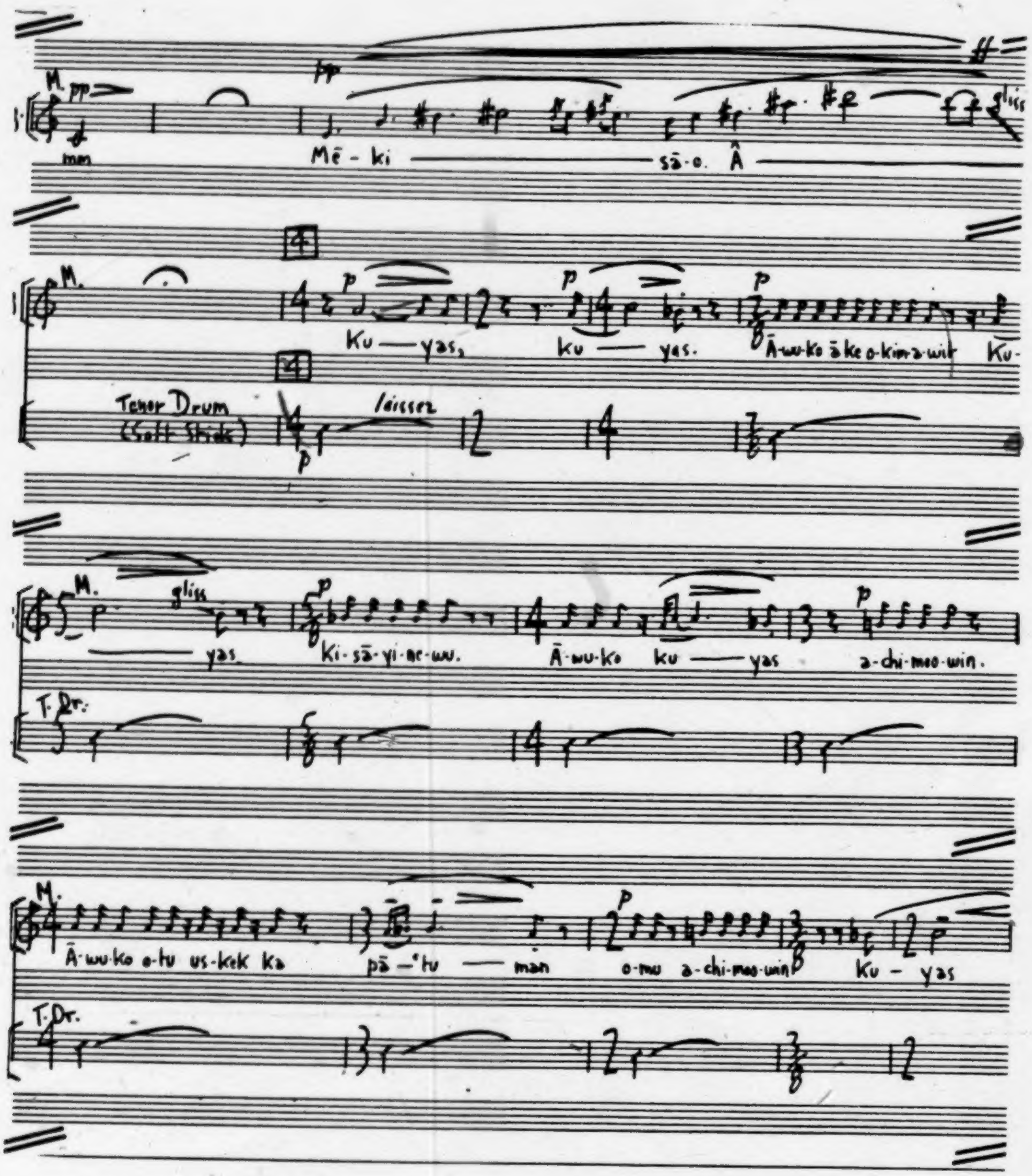
KUYAS

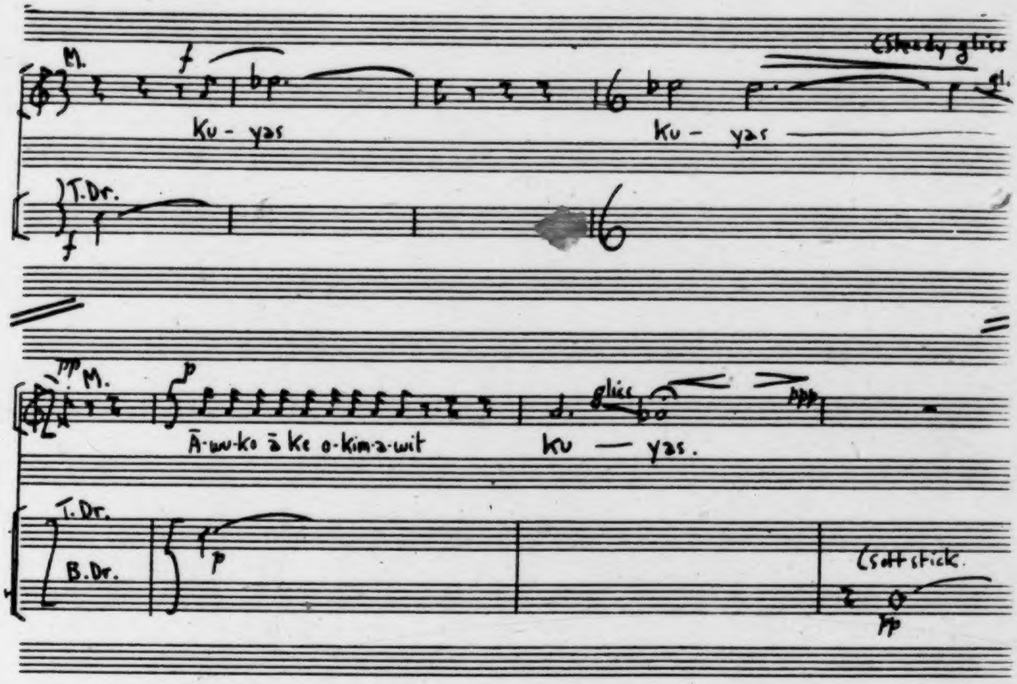

Molto Lento
Solo
p Marg.
Ha - no
ha - no
â - o
â - o
o
o
ha-no
ha-no
o
yi - e ī-e ī-e
ī-e
ha-no
o
yi - e e-yi - e
e
ī - e
Sâ — Kâ — stā — o — o-â
â — o
o — â — e
o
(Cond. Cue)
Hard Stk.
laissez vibrer
Tenor Drum
Hard Stk.
laissez vibrer
Bass Dr.


steady & continuous
gliss.
gliss.
á - o
yi - e
ô
hâ - no
hâ - no
(Cond. cue.)
Sleigh Bells
I PIU MOSSO
Marg.
(Mouth almost closed)
Â
I PIU MOSSO
Flute
S.B.'s
M.
(open)
Nu — moo — wu — naw. —
(Almost closed)
Â
Flt.
S.B.'s
M.
(open)
Kē-sa-mun-e-to,
Nu — moo — wu — noo — tā-o. — tā-o
Flt.
S.B.'s


M.
ta-o Kē-sa-mun-e-to, Nu — moo — wu — na — tā
Fl.
S.B's
M.
— o. —
1 Allegro (molto)
p
"Kē-sa-mu-ne-to, ka ke-si-kā'k ne-yu ka no-tā-ut-āy-an ne ku ma-
Fl.
S.B's
M
Ka ke-si-kā'k ne-yu ka no-tā-ut-
Fl.
p
Med. Tom Tom
mf
Hard Stk.
S.B's
mf
f
M.
p f
āy-an ne ku ma-chen mus — Kwâ. Ka ke-si-kā'k ne-yu ka no-tā-ut-āy-an
Fl.
T.T.
S.B's

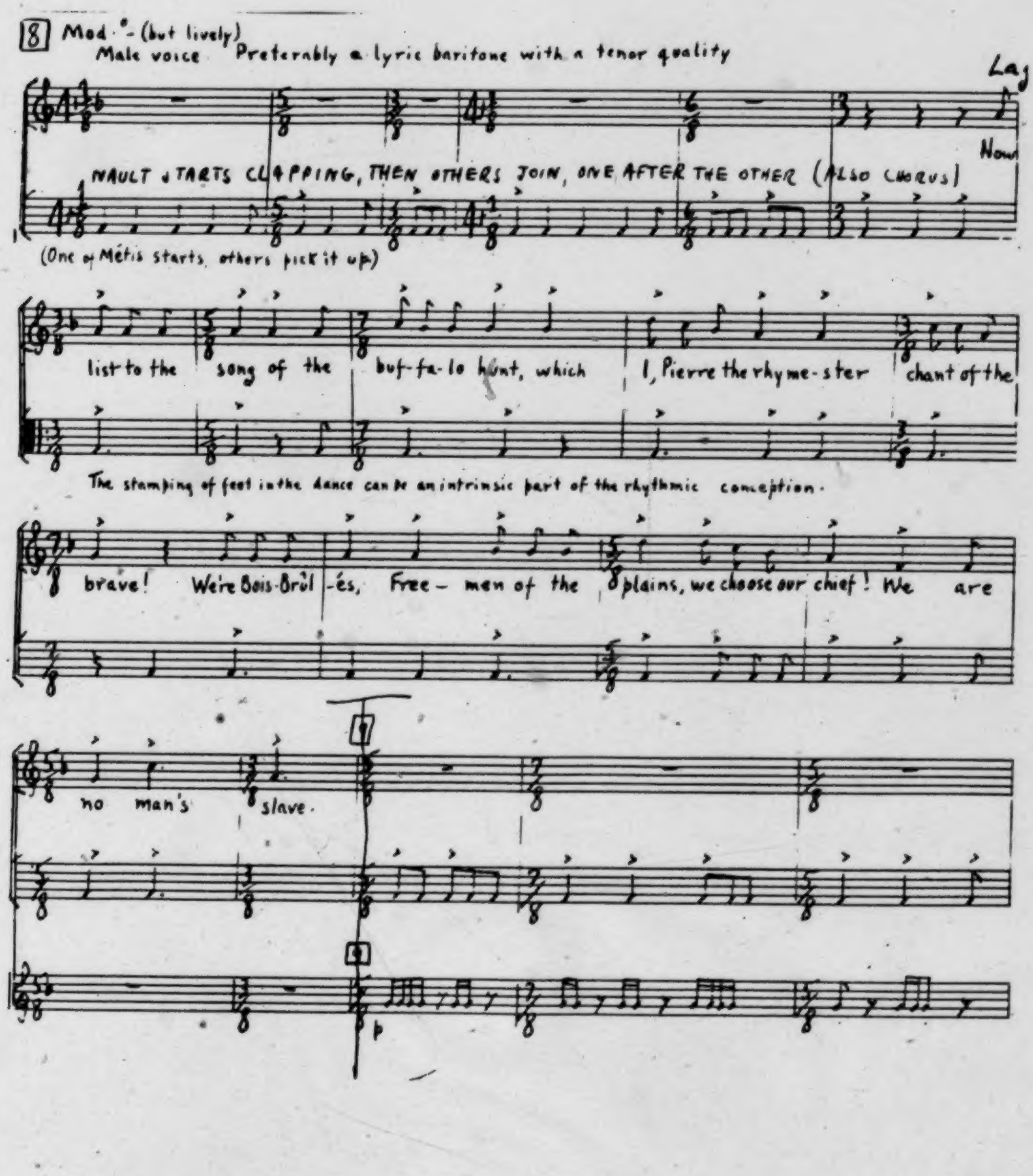

M.
â — misk. Ka-ke-si-ka'ik moos — wâ. ne-yu/wâ — poos/Ka/
Flt.
T.T.
S.B.'s
M.
accel.
up — pis-chē moos-soos no-ta-ut-ây-an âh — tik. Oka, ka ke-si-ka'ik ne-yu ka no-tā-ut-ây
Flt.
accel.
T.T.
S.B.'s
p cresc. e accel.
p cresc. e accel
Presto
rall. molto
3 Molto Lento
M.
on ne ku mach-en wâ — wâs-kā — sē-o."
Presto
Flt.
Flutter
tr
p
rall. molto
3 Molto Lento
Presto
T.T.
rall. molto
pp
S.B.'s
M.
p
pp
Kē-sa-mu-ne-to
p
Pu'-ki-si-moo
p
ppp
mm

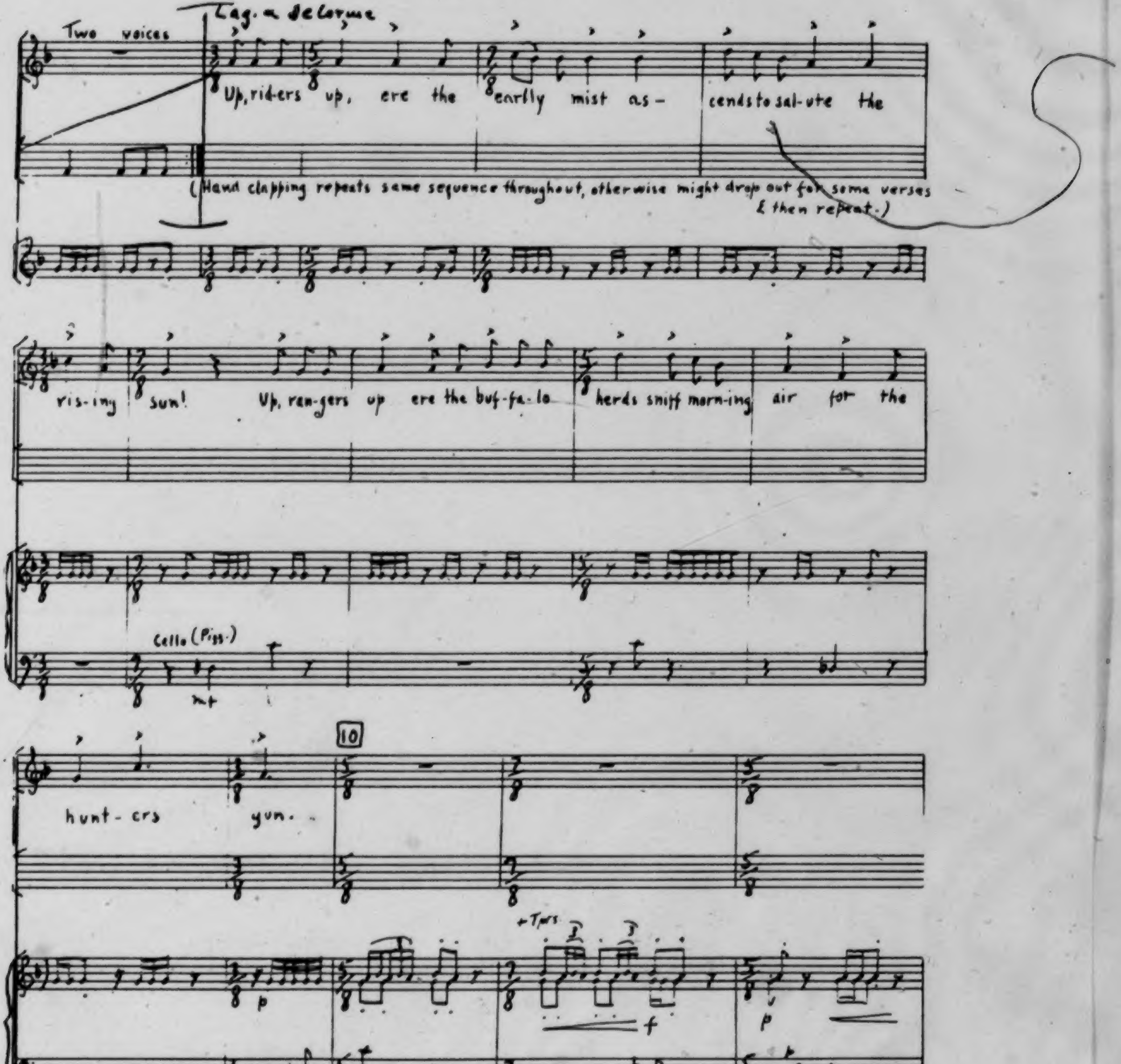

M.
pp
mm
Mē - ki
sā-o. Â
gliss
4
p
Ku — yas,
ku — yas.
Ā-wu-ko ā-ke o-kim-a-wit Ku-
Tenor Drum
(Soft Stick)
laissez
yas.
Ki-sā-yi-ne-uu.
Ā-wu-ko ku — yas
a-chi-moo-win.
T. Dr.
Ā-wu-ko o-tu us-kek ka
pā-'tu — man
o-mu a-chi-moo-win
Ku - yas


M.
f
Ku - yas
(Steady gliss
gl.
Ku - yas
T.Dr.
f
pp
M.
p
Ā-wu-ko ā ke o-kim-a-wit
gliss
Ku — yas.
ppp
T.Dr.
B.Dr.
p
(soft stick
pp

APPENDIX II

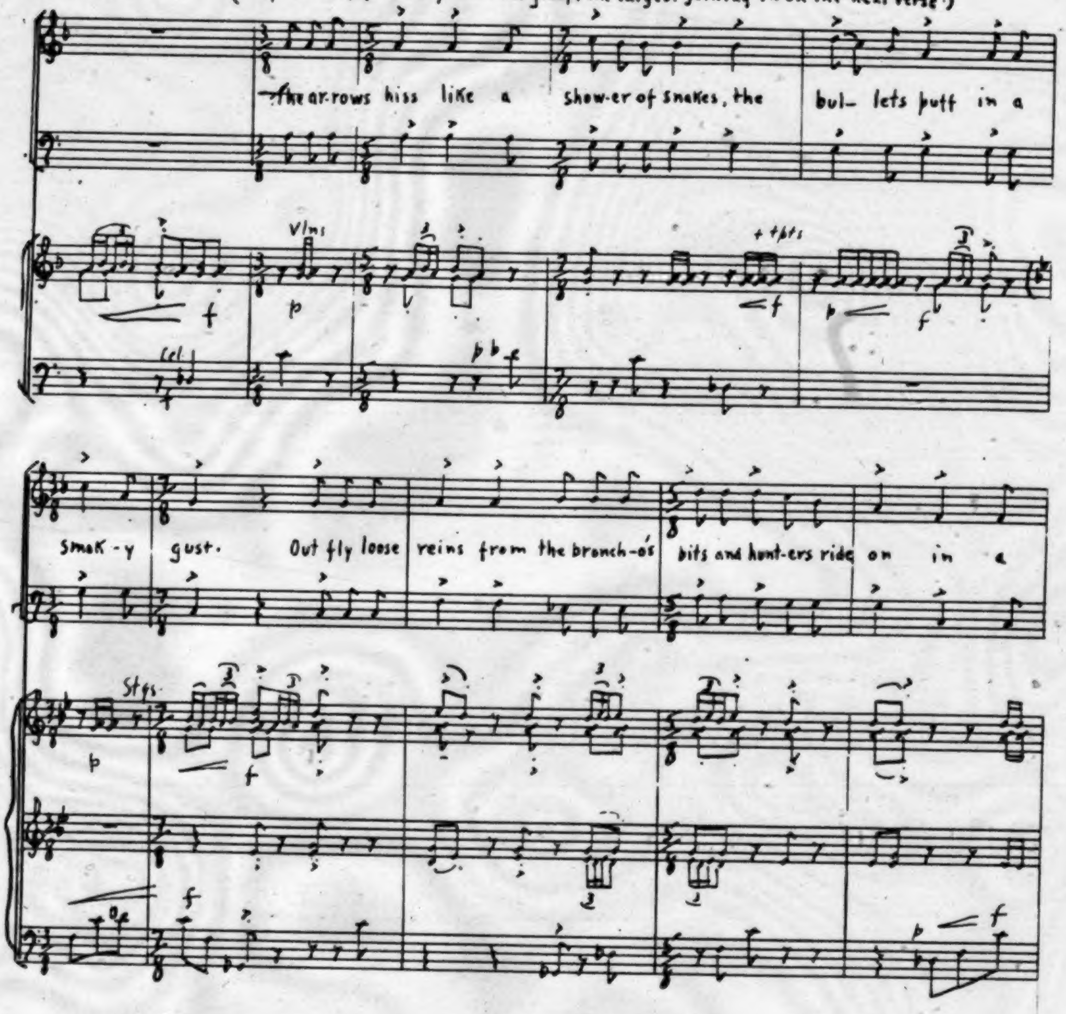
THE BUFFALO HUNT

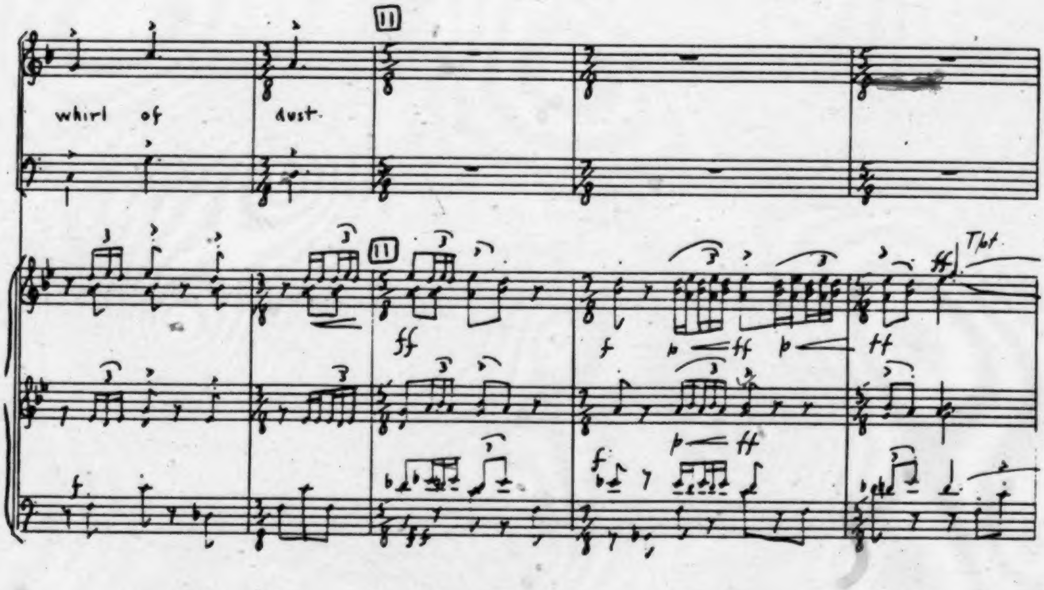

8
Mod.°- (but lively)
Male voice Preferably a lyric baritone with a tenor quality
Lag
Now
NAULT STARTS CLAPPING, THEN OTHERS JOIN, ONE AFTER THE OTHER (ALSO CHORUS)
(One of Métis starts, others pick it up)
list to the song of the buf-fa-lo hunt, which I, Pierre the rhyme-ster chant of the
The stamping of feet in the dance can be an intrinsic part of the rhythmic conception.
brave! We're Bois-Brûl-és, Free-men of the plains, we choose our chief! We are
no man's slave.
9
p

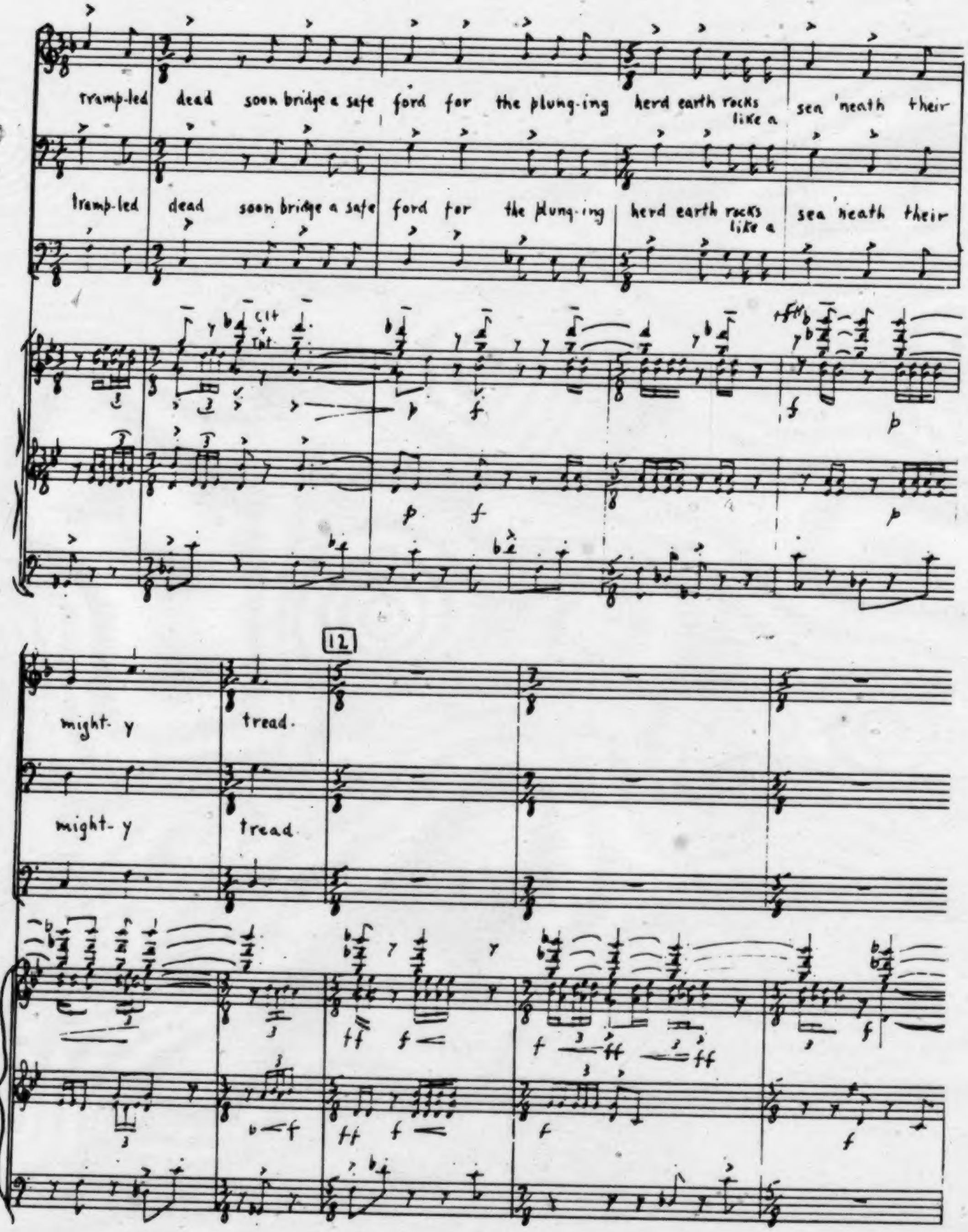

Two voices
Lag. a de Lorme
Up, rid-ers up, ere the early mist as- cends to sal-ute the rising sun! Up, ran-gers up ere the buf-fa-lo herds sniff morn-ing air for the hunt-ers gun.
Cello (Pizz.)
mf
10
p
+ Tprs
f
p

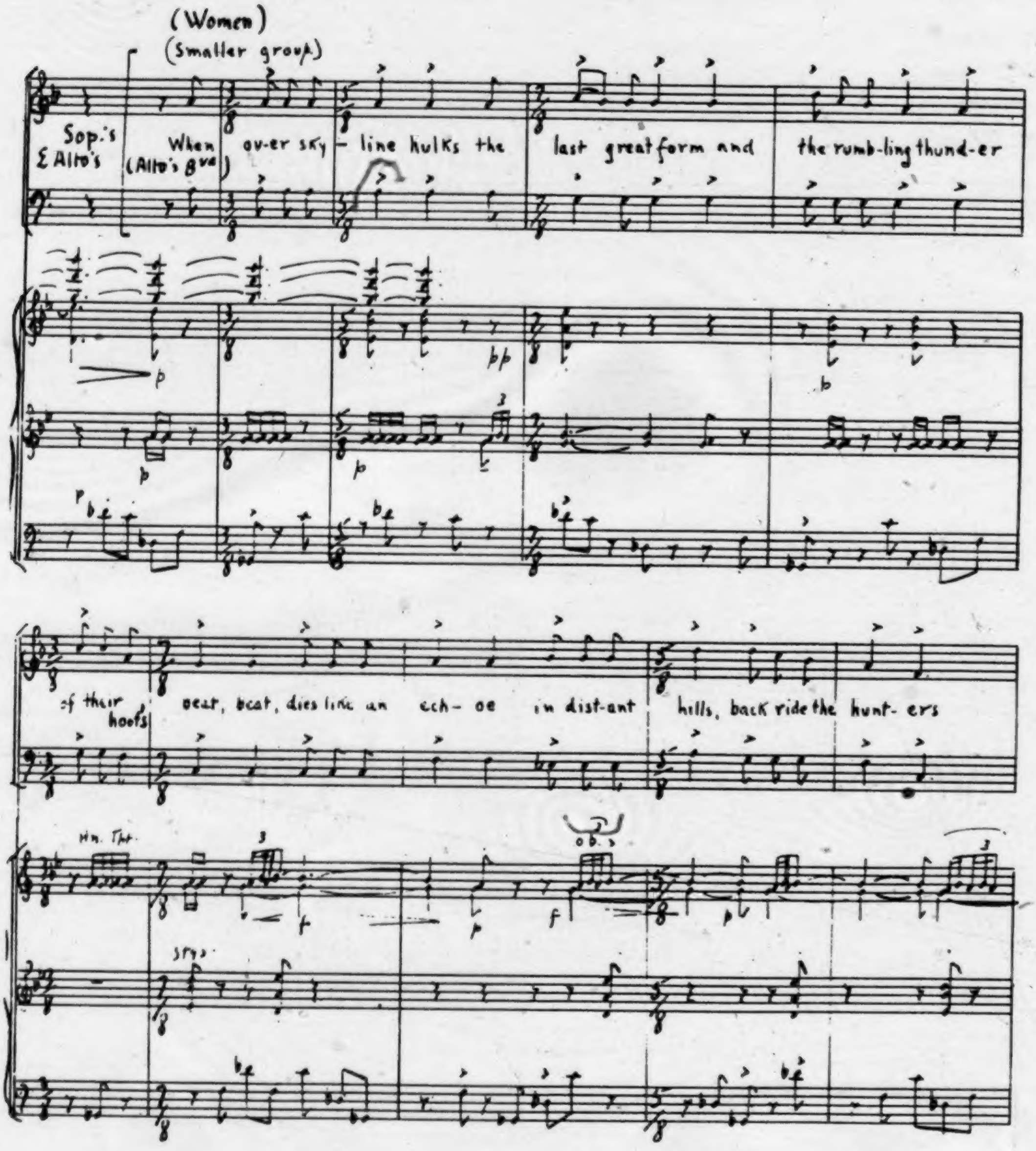
(Hand clapping repeats same sequence throughout, otherwise might drop out for some verses & then repeat.)

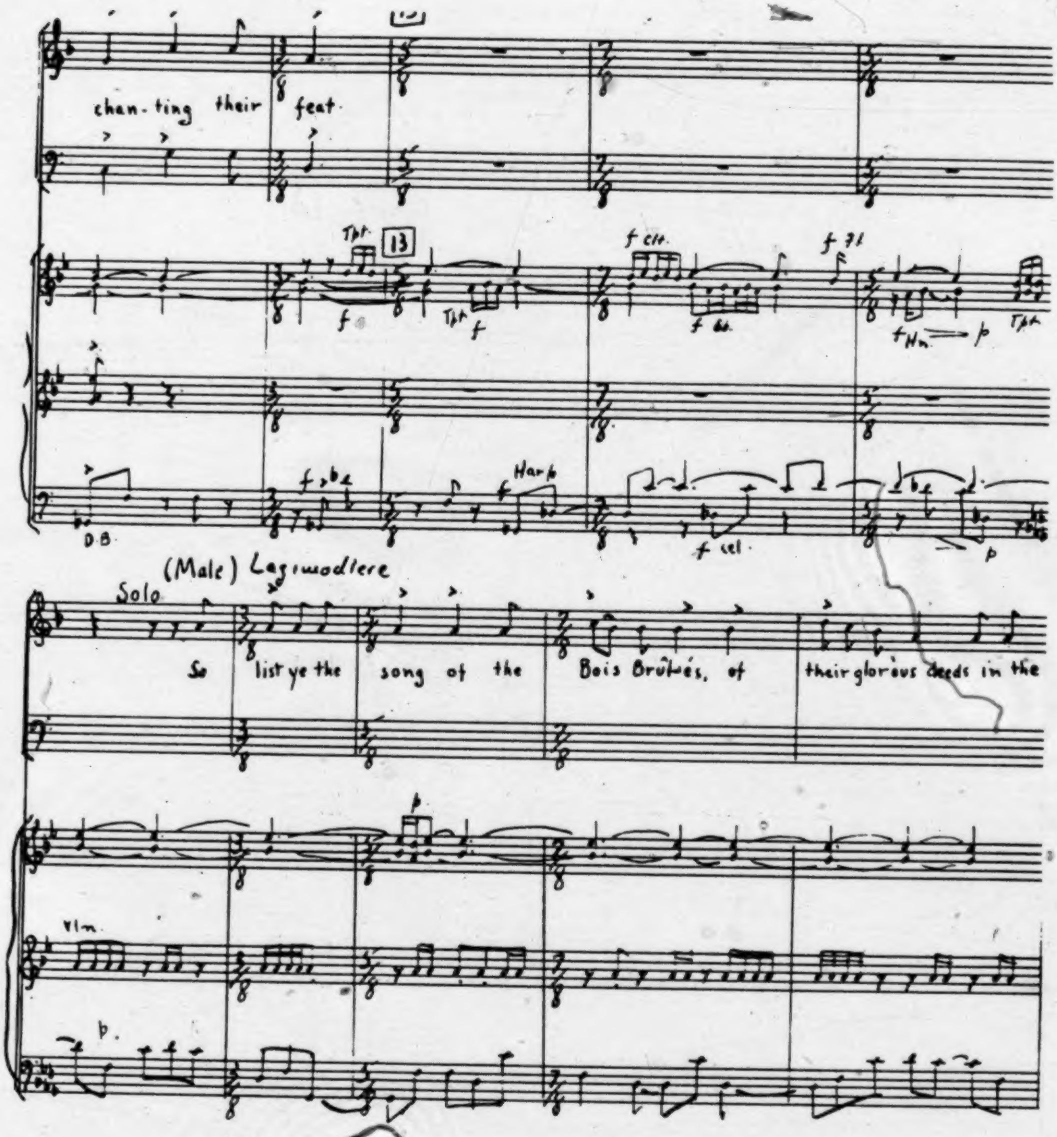
(Any number) (Possibly a small group, the largest joining in on the next verse.)

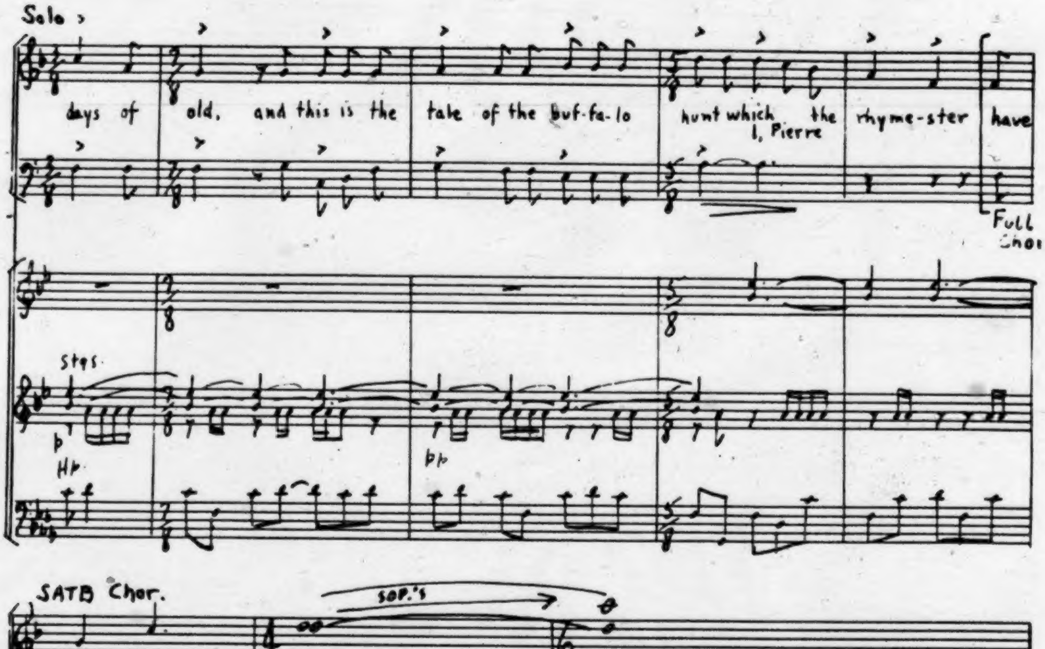

The ar-rows hiss like a show-er of snakes, the bul- lets puff in a
Vlns
p
f
+ tpts
Cel
smok-y gust. Out fly loose reins from the bronch-os bits and hunt-ers ride on in a
Stgs.
p
f


11
whirl of dust·
11
Tpt
ff
f
p
ff
The bel-low-ing bull's rush blind with fear through riv-er and marsh, while the
The bel-low-ing bulls rush blind with fear through riv-er and marsh, while the
ff
f
ff


tramp-led dead soon bridge a safe ford for the plung-ing herd earth rocks like a sea 'neath their
tramp-led dead soon bridge a safe ford for the plung-ing herd earth rocks like a sea 'neath their
might-y tread.
might-y tread.
12

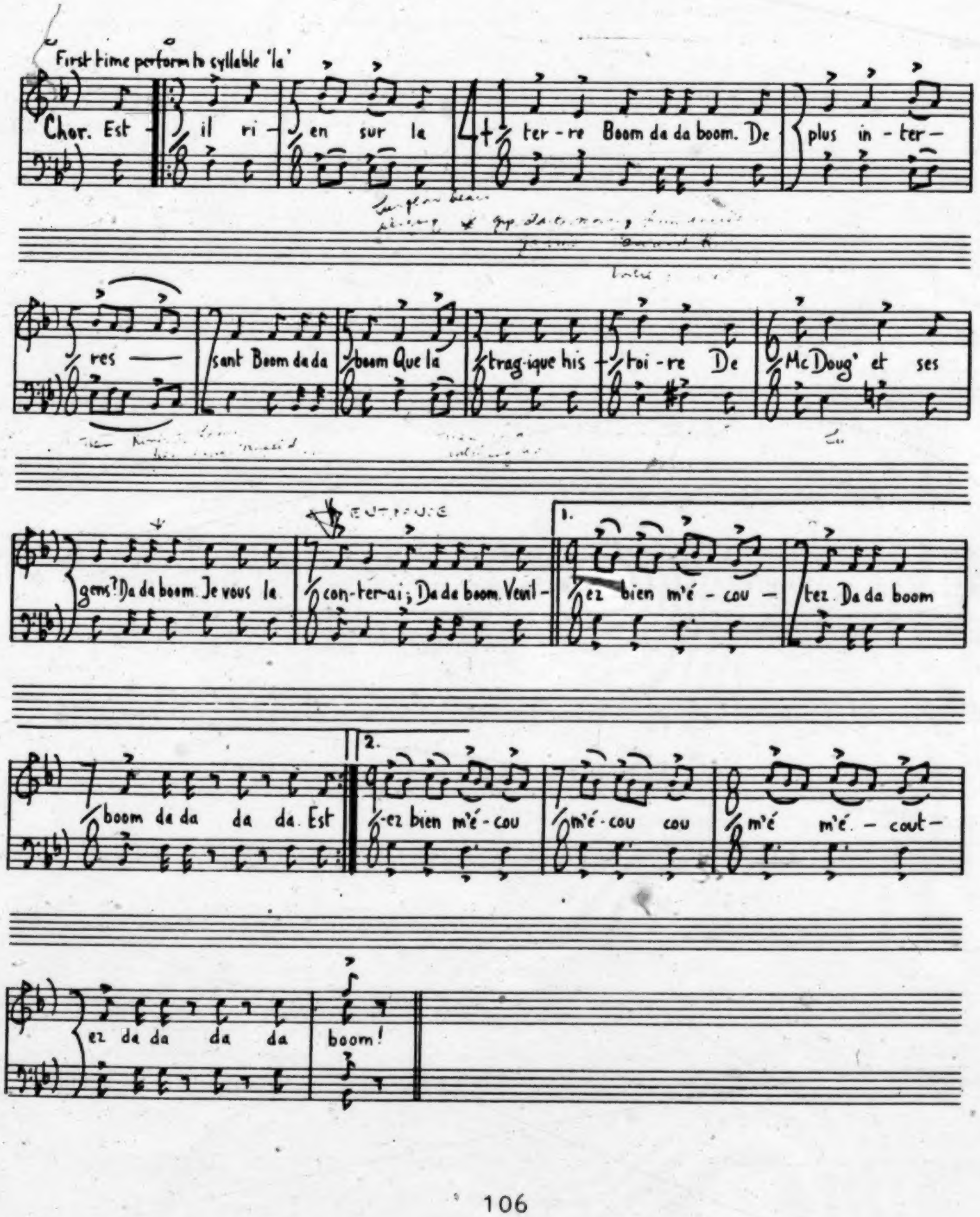

(Women)
(Smaller group)
Sop.'s
& Alto's
(Alto's 8va)
When ov-er sky - line hulks the last great form and the rumb-ling thund-er
p
pp
p
p
of their hoofs beat, beat, dies like an ech - oe in dist-ant hills, back ride the hunt- ers
Hn. Thr.
Str.
Ob.
f
p
f
p
3


chan-ting their feat.
13
Tpt.
f
f Cl.
f Fl.
Tpt.
f Hn. p
Tpt.
f Bs.
Harp
f cel.
p
D.B.
(Male) Lagimodiere
Solo
So list ye the song of the Bois Brûlés, of their glorious deeds in the
p
Vln.
p


Solo
days of old, and this is the tale of the buf-fa-lo hunt which the rhyme-ster have
I, Pierre
Full Chor
Stgs.
p
Hp.
bp
SATB Chor.
sop.'s
proud-ly told.
tr.
cresc.
bp
p

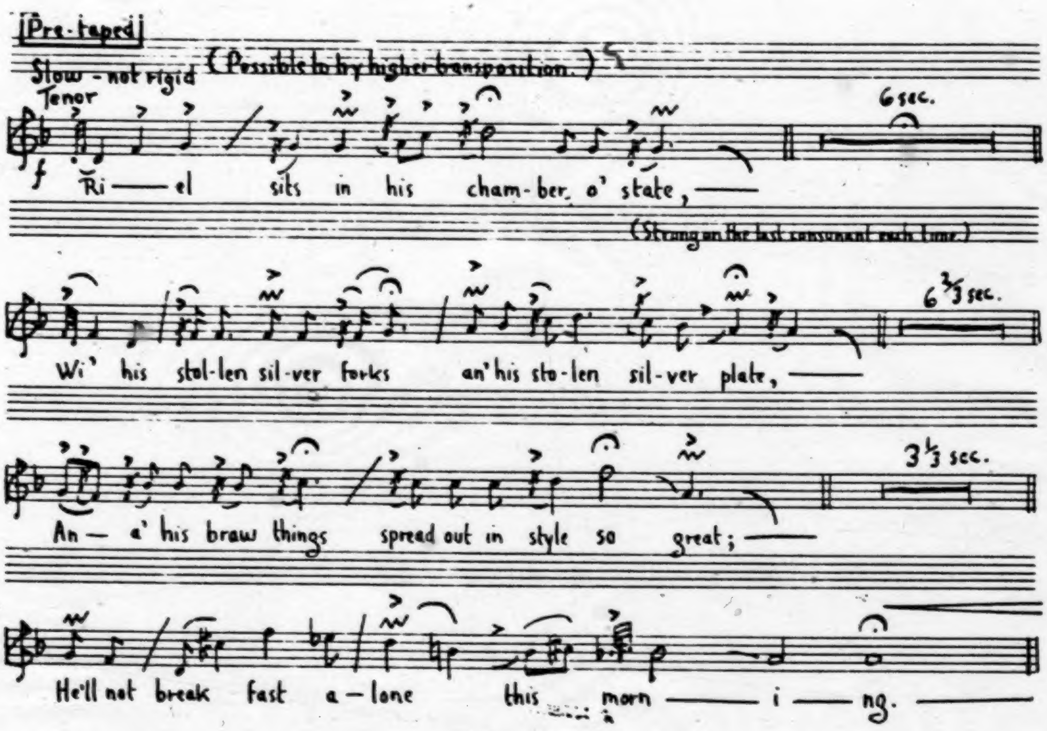
APPENDIX III

LE ROI MALHEUREUX


First time perform to syllable 'la'
Chor.
Est - il ri - en sur la ter - re Boom da da boom. De plus in - ter - res — sant Boom da da boom Que la trag - ique his - toi - re De McDoug' et ses
gens? Da da boom. Je vous la con - ter - ai; Da da boom. Veuil -
ENTRANCE
1.
lez bien m'é - cou - tez. Da da boom boom da da da da. Est
2.
-ez bien m'é - cou m'é - cou cou m'é m'é. - cout - ez da da da da boom!

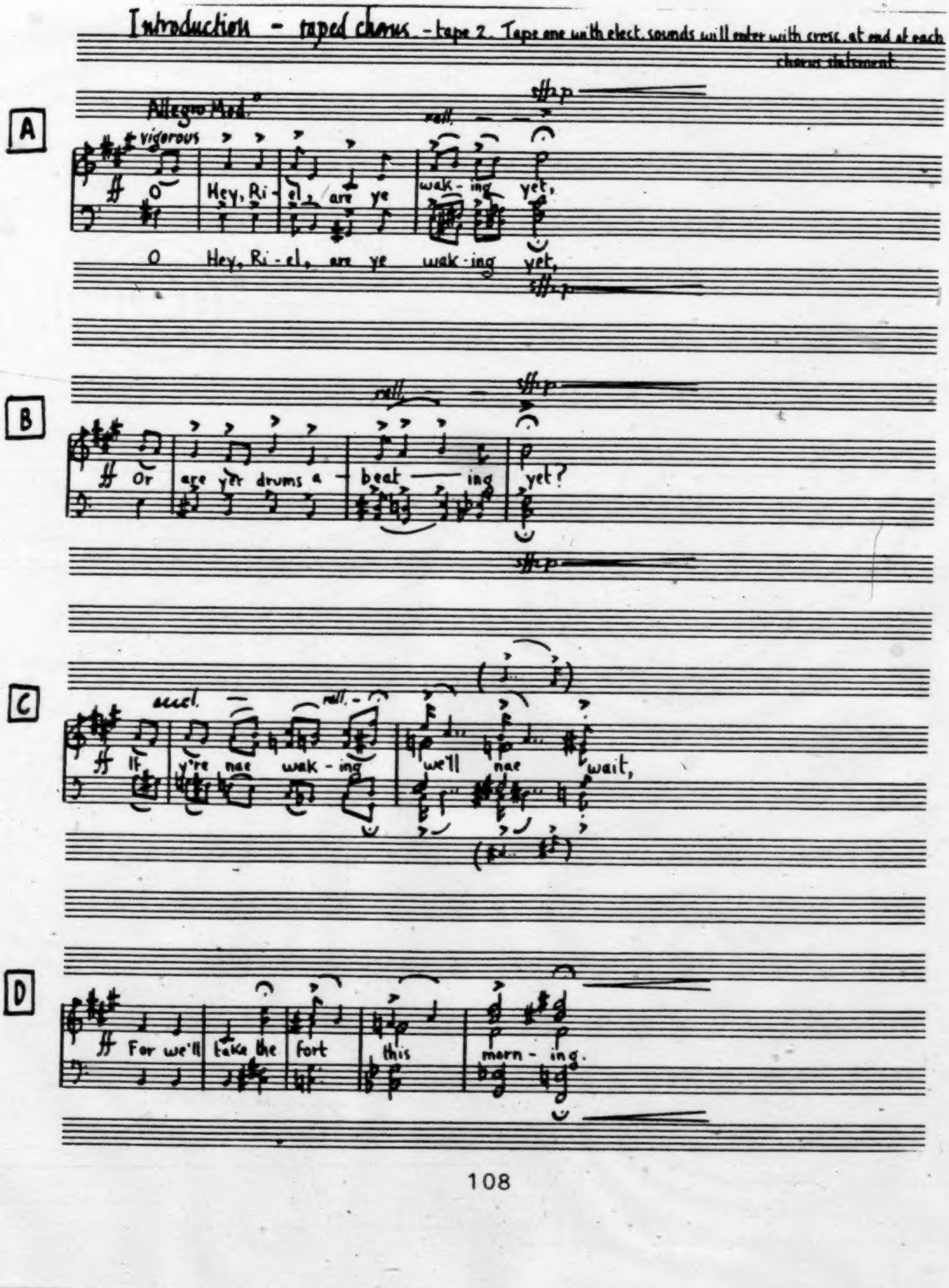
APPENDIX IV

RIEL SITS IN HIS CHAMBER O' STATE


[Pre-taped]
Slow - not rigid
(Possible to try higher transposition.)
Tenor
f
Ri — el sits in his cham-ber o' state, —
6 sec.
(Strong on the last consonant each time.)
Wi' his stol-len sil-ver forks an' his sto-len sil-ver plate, —
6 2/3 sec.
An — a' his braw things spread out in style so great; —
3 1/3 sec.
He'll not break fast a — lone this morn — i — ng. —

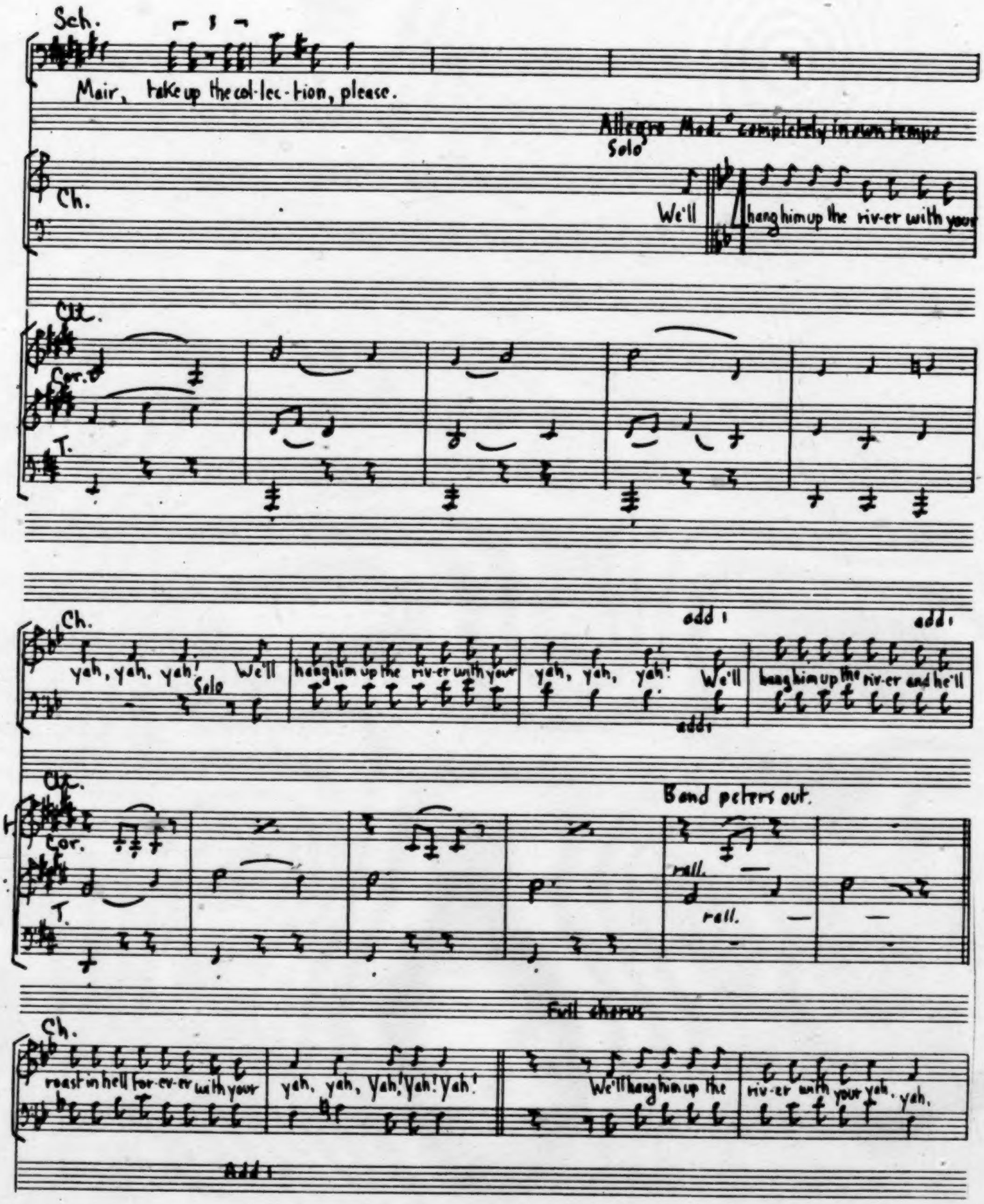
APPENDIX V

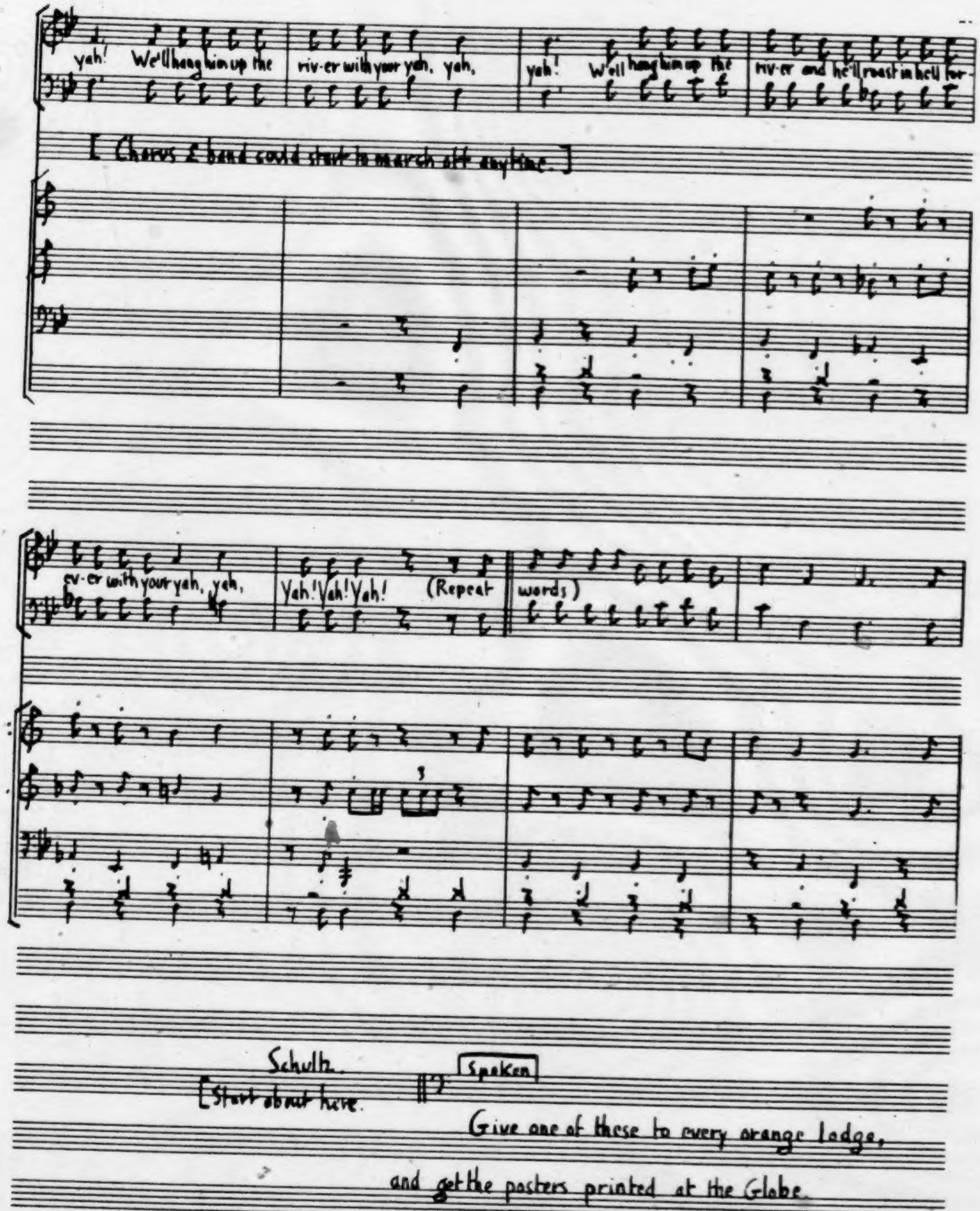
O HEY, RIEL


Introduction - taped chorus. - tape 2. Tape one with elect. sounds will enter with cresc. at end of each chorus statement.
A
Allegro Mod.
vigorous
rall.
sfz p
O Hey, Ri-el, are ye wak-ing yet,
O Hey, Ri-el, are ye wak-ing yet,
B
rall.
Or are yer drums a - beat - ing yet?
C
accel.
rall.
If y're nae wak-ing we'll nae wait,
D
For we'll take the fort this morn - ing.

APPENDIX VI

WE'LL HANG HIM UP THE RIVER


Sch.
Mair, take up the col-lec-tion, please.
Allegro Mod.° completely in own tempo
Solo
Ch.
We'll
hang him up the riv-er with your
Clt.
Cor.
T.
Ch.
yah, yah, yah!
Solo
We'll
hang him up the riv-er with your
yah, yah, yah!
We'll
add 1
add 1
hang him up the riv-er and he'll
add 1
Clt.
Cor.
T.
Band peters out.
rall.
rall.
Ch.
roast in hell for-ev-er with your
yah, yah, yah! Yah! Yah!
Full chorus
We'll hang him up the
riv-er with your yah. yah.
Add 1


yah! We'll hang him up the riv-er with your yah, yah, yah! We'll hang him up the riv-er and he'll roast in hell for-
ev-er with your yah, yah, Yah! Yah! Yah! (Repeat words)
Spoken

[Chorus & band could start to march off anytime.]

Schultz.
[Start about here.

Give one of these to every orange lodge,
and get the posters printed at the Globe.